

**BRITISH DIPLOMATIC PERCEPTIONS OF MODERNISATION  
AND CHANGE IN EARLY MEIJI JAPAN, 1868-90**

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2006



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## **ABSTRACT**

In studying foreign images, it is generally necessary to examine the views of relevant actors, and few, if any, actors are more relevant than diplomats as they are directly related to foreign diplomacy or relations between countries. While many works have been written on popular images of Meiji Japan as perceived by Western visitors, very few have so far touched on images of Meiji Japan as viewed by British diplomats. Using mainly archive materials, this thesis aims to study British diplomatic views of political, economic and social change in Japan during the crucial early stages of that country's modernisation in the first half of the Meiji period. The thesis examines various patterns of diplomatic views as they witnessed the different changes that took place in Meiji Japan, most notably the diversity of views and images of the modernisation of the country. In addition, the thesis also addresses the question of whether British diplomatic views of Japan fit an 'Orientalist' interpretation of Western superiority and Oriental inferiority as popularized by Edward Said. Nevertheless, instead of discussing the issue of 'Orientalism' in depth, this thesis only attempts to test the validity of the Said's theory based on the views held by British diplomats. Given the various changing aspects of Meiji Japan covered in this work, it is hoped that this thesis will help to contribute to the study of Meiji Japan and the history of images of Japan in Western minds. And, since the diplomats' views and attitudes were based on close observation of contemporary conditions and often reflected the opinions of Japanese leaders, it is also hoped that this investigation will help to illuminate the background of British diplomacy and thus assist in providing a fuller understanding of British policy towards Meiji Japan.

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In writing this thesis, I have incurred a number of debts. First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Richard L. Sims of the History Department, School of Oriental and African Studies for supervising this thesis and sharing with me his insights into the history of early Meiji Japan. I would also like to thank the staff of the Public Record Office, the British Library and the Cambridge University Library for their assistance. I am also grateful to my family without whose endless moral support this task would have been much more arduous. To my three sons, you are my motivation and strength to keep going on.

## INTRODUCTION

In the history of the modern world, no country has ever surpassed Japan in its awe-inspiring leap from a feudal state to become a world Power in less than fifty years. For this, Japan was greatly indebted to those enlightened leaders who worked relentlessly, especially after the Meiji Ishin, to effect the modernisation<sup>1</sup> of the country. Their motivation was clear, that is, as illustrated in the slogan '*fukoku kyohei*', they sought to create a modern strong and rich Japan that would stand on an equal footing with the more advanced West and free of the so-called unequal treaties, which were damaging to the country. In pursuing this goal, the Meiji leaders strove to ensure that their modernising endeavours would be appreciated not only by their own people but also by foreigners, especially Western diplomats in Japan. Although the diplomats did not influence public images in their own countries in the same way that Western travelers and visitors who wrote about Japan did, it was their reports which directly informed their respective governments of developments in Japanese society, economic practices, political systems and foreign policy. This was particularly important as the fact that they were official representatives of their governments meant that if anything was to be done to convince the West of Japanese progress and, more specifically, show that the continuation of the much detested unequal treaties was unnecessary, the Meiji leaders would have to influence the views and images held by these diplomats.

This thesis will focus on the views and perceptions of British diplomats<sup>2</sup> in Japan since they represented the major world Power with the greatest interests in East Asia and, unlike most British citizens who visited or worked in Japan, the nature of their work gave particular insights into the modernising process in the country, and more significantly,

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<sup>1</sup> While the word seems to be used almost synonymously with 'Westernisation', the two words are not equivalent in meaning. One definition of 'modernisation' is 'a process – a movement from traditional or quasi-traditional order to certain desired types of technology and associated form of social structure, value orientations and motivations and norms.' Unlike 'Westernisation', 'modernisation' is not just a simple process of imitation or superficial acquisition of some isolated traits of the more advanced countries. Rather, it involves selection of required elements for integration into the culture. Furthermore, unlike 'Westernisation', the model used is not necessarily related to Western societies for non-Western societies too can provide the models for 'modernisation'. See S. C. Dube, 'Modernisation and Its Adaptive Demands on Indian Society', in Pandey, Rajendra, *Modernisation and Social Change* (New Delhi: Criterion Publications), 1988, pp. 33-35. To illustrate further the meaning of 'modernisation', it has also been defined as 'a process that increases the economic and political capabilities of a society: it increases economic capabilities through industrialization, and political capabilities through bureaucratization.' Inglehart, R., *Modernization and Postmodernization* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press), 1997, p.5. Compared to these broader meanings of 'modernisation', 'Westernisation' strictly refers to a process in which non-Western societies embrace Western culture and systems.

<sup>2</sup> By British diplomats I mean not only the British Minister or Chargé d'Affaires who was in charge of the Legation at the capital Tokyo (previously known as Yedo or Edo), but also the secretaries and lesser officials who acted as assistants and interpreters to the minister, and the consuls and vice-consuls who were

gave them access to the leaders of Meiji Japan. As a result, much valuable information and many interesting comments on Meiji Japan are found in the diplomats' reports. Moreover, their official reports to Whitehall, unlike the written accounts by Western visitors, are likely to have influenced the British government's policies towards Meiji Japan.

In assessing the views held by British diplomats, this thesis will analyze to what extent the diplomats approved or disapproved of what they saw during the modernisation process of the country; what, if any, were the aspects of changing Japan that the diplomats tended to stress or ignore; whether there were underlying continuities in British diplomatic views and perceptions of Japan; to what degree there were similarities or differences in British diplomatic views; how much the views changed in accordance with changes that took place in Meiji Japan; in what measure the diplomatic views contributed to British general policy towards Japan; and whether British diplomatic reports exemplified the attitudes which according to Edward Said typified Western ideas of the Middle East and, by extension, of the East in general. In this last respect British diplomatic views and images of Japan can be seen in some measure as a test case for assessing the validity of the concept of 'Orientalism' as put forward by Said and others.<sup>3</sup>

In examining these views, I have separated this thesis into six main chapters, each concerned with a particular aspect of changing Japan. The first chapter focuses on British diplomatic views of the Meiji Restoration from 1868 to 1871; the second chapter discusses British diplomats' perceptions of the dismantling of Japanese feudalism in 1871-1877; the third chapter analyzes British diplomats' perceptions of Japanese political development in 1878-1890; the fourth chapter examines British diplomats' views of early Meiji economic development; the fifth chapter discusses British diplomats' views of social change in early Meiji Japan; and the sixth chapter deals with British diplomats' perceptions of Japan as an East-Asian power.

In writing this thesis, I have used primarily official diplomatic dispatches kept at the Public Record Office. Sent by the British minister or chargé d'affaires to their superiors at Whitehall, these reports often contained detailed accounts of events that happened in Japan during 1868-90. While the existing published works on Japan tend to ignore these official materials because they are unpublished, except for those dispatches reproduced in Blue Books, they are valuable first-hand testimonies of changing Japan by

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stationed at different Japanese treaty ports such as Hyogo and Osaka, Kanagawa, Yokohama, Niigata and Hakodate.

<sup>3</sup> See Said, Edward E., *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin), 1978.

men who enjoyed a somewhat different vantage point from other Westerners. The reports provide new insights and information, some of which was unknown to contemporaries and in a number of cases has even escaped the attention of historians. The fact that the diplomats were involved in regular diplomatic dealings with Japanese statesmen provided them, to some extent at least, with access to inside information about the intentions and aims behind various Japanese policies and changes, as well as the kinds of problems faced by the Japanese government in modernisation. This is particularly so in the case of Ernest Satow who, thanks to his Japanese language skill and friendship with some Japanese leaders, enjoyed an exceptional insight into their minds and into the working of Japanese government.

In addition, I have also used consular reports, which were regular letters sent to the British minister at Yedo or Tokyo by consuls in the treaty ports. Kept at the Public Record Office, these unpublished materials are also illuminating in that they often provided the stories behind the local trade figures, indirectly revealing the tensions and conflicts within the foreign communities at the ports or the Japanese economic policies and practices. Moreover, their reports sometimes provide details of particular events that occurred in nearby areas and highlight some information which had political significance or was related to the social policies of the Meiji government.

In addition to the official and consular reports, the thesis also makes use, where they are available, of British diplomats' personal diaries and of private letters sent by them to family members in Britain. These unofficial records are helpful in providing a fuller picture of diplomats' attitudes and views, as they often contained frank and forthright comments on Meiji modernisation.

While the unpublished official and consular reports add usefully to the sum of knowledge of the history of Meiji Japan, they also have few weaknesses. The stationing of the British minister and consuls at major cities and treaty ports like Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Niigata and Hokkaido means that the reports are concerned mainly with ongoing trading activities at these places, with minimal information on what was happening in the interior of Japan. Only on rare occasions were special visits made by British diplomatic officers into more distant districts and villages to gather particular information such as on the silk, tea and mining industries. Moreover, not all British diplomats had close contacts or knew the Japanese language. Having no useful means or tools to obtain information, some of the diplomats concentrated in their dispatches mainly on trade and the obvious changes that they saw taking place at the cities and ports. Furthermore, the reports, letters and diaries of the British diplomats did not cover all aspects of modernisation of

Meiji Japan. They failed, for instance, to give attention to changes in Japanese literature and culture, and even to important political issues like the Charter Oath of 1868, the major Doctrinal Promulgation Campaign of the 1870s and the details of the provisions of the Meiji Constitution. As to why they ignored these issues, one can only speculate, but one major reason clearly is that what diplomats saw as important and gave their main attention to were the expansion of British foreign trade in Japan, the issue of Christianity and the anti-foreign movement in Japan, and the protection of British interests and influence in Japan against other Western Powers.

As to the sources of images held by British diplomats, unlike many writers on Japan, the diplomats were mostly resident there for a substantial period, during which they had direct experience of what was going on in Japan and saw for themselves the various political, social and economic changes that were taking place. Moreover, being in Japan and acting as diplomatic representatives of a foreign country brought them into contact with Japanese leaders. The longer they stayed in Japan, the more likely they were to have more and better contacts with Japanese leaders. Such contacts thus served as a source of images as they provided the diplomats with substantial amounts of information, some of which would not even have been available to many Japanese. The nature of the contacts, however, varied from informal and friendly encounters to formal and serious meetings, and they were the results of both diplomatic expediency and curiosity on the part of British diplomats and Japanese statesmen. There were times when British diplomats and Japanese leaders had to come together out of necessity to discuss issues affecting both countries and there were times when British diplomats and Meiji leaders took the initiative to establish contacts in order to keep abreast of ongoing developments.

The status of individual diplomats also affected the nature and extent of the information that they acquired or received. While their official position itself was not always relevant in that sometimes lesser officers gained better access to Japanese leaders (for instance, due to language skill or closer acquaintance with Japanese leaders), an official of superior rank such as the British minister had the advantage of constantly dealing with prominent Japanese leaders with regard to various issues affecting the relationship and interests of both countries. Moreover, as his discussions with Japanese leaders covered various political, economic, social and foreign policy matters, the British minister was able to acquire a more rounded view of Meiji Japan compared to the lesser diplomatic officials. In addition, as the latter were required to send through the legation in Tokyo regular reports on developments at different treaty ports and on various issues or

events relating to Japan, this further enhanced the knowledge acquired by the British minister.

Nevertheless, like those of other Westerners, British diplomatic images of Meiji Japan may also have been based on older writings by both Westerners and Japanese, such as the *History of Japan* by Engelbert Kaempfer (published in 1727) and works by Philipp Franz von Siebold (published during the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s). Similarly, later works by Westerners such as *The Capital of the Tycoon* by British diplomat Rutherford Alcock (1863), *Unbeaten Tracks of Japan* by female British traveler Isabella Bird (1880) or the more popular *Madam Chrysanthemum* by Frenchman Pierre Loti (1885) may well have been read by British diplomats. A series of essays on Japan published in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (the first edition published in 1771) could have also been sources of reference in formulating images of Japan. Moreover, written accounts by foreigners at Japanese treaty ports whose views appeared in locally published English-language newspapers may also have contributed to diplomats' views and images of the country. In addition to these Western accounts, British diplomats may have also based their images on Japanese written sources. This was possible through skilled interpreters like Algernon Mitford, William Aston and Ernest Satow, whose knowledge of Japanese enabled them to gather and disseminate information culled from either Japanese newspapers or Meiji government publications.

The fact that some British diplomats became involved in the academic study of Japan also helped to develop their images of the country. Their involvement in *The Asiatic Society of Japan*, which met regularly and published learned articles in its *Transactions*, enabled them to acquire more information and accordingly form better and more accurate images of Meiji Japan. The society, which was formed in 1872 with an aim of studying Japanese culture, history and language (i.e. Japanology) in detail, had as its co-founders (among others) Satow and Aston, who, during their periods of service in Japan, involved themselves in many scholarly discussions and presented papers on various issues relating to Japan. Such interests and the opportunities to make acquaintance with leading Japanese scholars not only helped the diplomats to refine their images and views of Japan, but explain the greater amount of information contained in their reports and also, arguably, the sympathetic attitudes shown particularly by Satow towards Meiji Japan. Both Satow and Aston wrote extensively on Japanese history, literature, language and religion. Another diplomat who only served for a short period in Japan yet had an enthusiasm for Japanese history and art was Algernon Mitford, who wrote *Tales of Old Japan*.

As to the findings of this thesis, one will find that British diplomatic views ranged from the extremely critical to highly commendatory. Again, several of the mentioned factors were responsible for this, namely the dates and lengths of their periods of service in Japan, the different positions held by different diplomats in the diplomatic service, the differing nature of their contacts with Japanese statesmen, the extent of their knowledge of the Japanese language and of their involvement in scholarly study and research on Meiji Japan, and their awareness of written works and materials by either earlier or contemporary writers on Japan. Other additional factors were the substantial number of British diplomats in Meiji Japan (who outnumbered representatives of any other foreign Power), British diplomats' historical and working experience before coming to Japan, and last but not least British diplomats' own personalities. In addition to the diversity of views and images of Japan, the thesis will demonstrate that certain aspects of Meiji Japan tended to be emphasized by the diplomats while others received less attention or were completely ignored. Furthermore, one may find some underlying continuities and certain persistent patterns in British diplomatic views, and these include similarities and differences of views on certain aspects of Meiji Japan. Another finding is that while some diplomatic images or views changed with the ongoing developments in Japan, some other images or views remained unchanged.

In relation to British diplomatic images of Meiji Japan, it is worthy of note that the importance of images<sup>4</sup> in understanding foreign policy has been recognized by a number of historians, notably Iriye. In *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, which is concerned with self-images and mutual images between American and Japanese, Iriye asserts that 'the importance of studying images is now taken for granted as a starting point for any study of foreign relations'<sup>5</sup>, thus suggesting that images held by the people affected government policies. He further maintains that while discussions of international relations tend to concentrate on global strategy, national security and economic interests, in reality, however, a country's policies are more likely to be based on the way the people see themselves in relation to the world and their images of another country in a number of different contexts, namely, globalism, cosmopolitanism, nationalism, particularism and provincialism.<sup>6</sup> Based on this suggestion of Iriye, one may argue that if popular images are important, then images held by

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<sup>4</sup> I have used the word loosely with 'views' or 'perceptions' to mean ideas formed as a result of British diplomats' encounter with the process of modernisation and change in Meiji Japan.

<sup>5</sup> Iriye, A., (ed.), *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard Univ. Press), 1975, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Iriye, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-23.



policymakers as a result of reading reports by informed officials are likely to carry even more weight in shaping a country's policies. In another work, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations*, Iriye again touches on images, this time dealing with how policy makers and people in America, China and Japan viewed themselves and each other and how these images inevitably found their ways into official policy. As he puts it, 'All international relations...are relations among ideas, among images people and nations have of themselves and each other. The human mind must always intervene between the world and a given policy'.<sup>7</sup> Stressing the underlying images and stereotypes behind the respective government policies, he points out that not only were these images the results of emotion, prejudice, sentiments and moral considerations, but also of the way the people related themselves to their historical experiences and the world.<sup>8</sup> R. S. Schwantes's *Japanese and Americans: A Century of Cultural Relations*, also emphasizes mutual images, arguing that in addition to political and economic considerations, cultural relations also influenced Americans and Japanese opinions about, and attitudes towards, each other and contributed to the formulation of each country's foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

Following Iriye and Schwantes, this thesis seeks to examine the background of diplomatic images of Japan which may have influenced policy-making and need to be taken into account by historians of Anglo-Japanese relations, and here I would like to point out that until now nobody has undertaken this task. This undertaking, however, is by no means easy since, as maintained by Daniels, British perceptions of Japan have been 'moulded and remoulded by complex and rapidly changing circumstances.'<sup>10</sup> I should also note that in assessing the relationship of images to the making of policy, diplomats' views about matters which were not strictly diplomatic, such as Japanese modernisation and change, ought also to be taken into account even if such a factor cannot be easily weighed. This is because, as asserted in Iriye's work, 'considerations of national interests do not always dictate' how one views another country.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, this research attempts to demonstrate that British diplomats' views may have influenced not only British government policy but also, perhaps, Japanese decision-making in order to gain foreign

<sup>7</sup> Iriye, A., *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.), 1967, p. 326.

<sup>8</sup> Iriye, *Across the Pacific*, p. xvi.

<sup>9</sup> Schwantes, R. S., *Japanese and Americans: A Century of Cultural Relations* (New York: Harper & Brothers), 1955, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Daniels, G., *Elites, Governments and Citizens: Some British Perceptions of Japan, 1850-2000*, in Daniels, G., and Tsuzuki, C., (eds.), *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000: Social and Cultural Perspectives* Vol. 5. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2002, p. 3.

support for Japanese policies. Furthermore, in bringing forward British diplomatic views of Japanese modernisation and progress, and their reports about Japanese leaders' attitudes towards modernisation and the problems which resulted from it, this thesis also provides material for comparing how other late developing countries' efforts to modernize have been viewed by Western governments.

Besides examining the relation between images and policy-making, the neglect, in the existing literature dealing with Western perceptions of Meiji Japan, of British diplomats' views and images is also a justification for this thesis. For instance, Endymion Wilkinson's *Japan versus the West* focuses mainly on popular views and images of Japan held by Western adventurers and visitors.<sup>12</sup> A work drawing on more diversified sources yet also concerned with popular images is Jean-Pierre Lehmann's *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1859-1905*. Basing himself particularly on contemporary newspapers and magazines, he makes use of writings by Westerners of different backgrounds, notably Britons and Frenchmen but also Americans and Germans.<sup>13</sup> Using mainly monthly and quarterly reviews and magazines, Toshio Yokoyama's *Japan in the Victorian Mind* concerns itself with images held by the British general public towards Japan in 1850-80. Studying a wide variety of images relating to Japanese international relations, politics, economics, religion, society and arts and crafts, it is unfortunate that the work stops short of considering British views in the 1880s, during which many significant and visible changes took place in Japan.<sup>14</sup> A recent work, *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1600-2000: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Gordon Daniels and Chushichi Tsuzuki is an extensive study of mutual images held by British and Japanese covering the period over four centuries from 1600-2000. It does contain an analysis by Daniels of images held by British diplomatic personnel (in particular, Laurence Oliphant, Sir Rutherford Alcock, Algernon Mitford and William Aston) who served in Japan in 1868-90 as Daniels both discusses the kinds of images formed before and after the opening of Japan and examines changes in diplomats' views.<sup>15</sup> This is, however, quite brief.

As to the nature of images, Wilkinson for instance, maintains that in the minds of both Europeans and Japanese, there has long existed a limited stock of stereotyped

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<sup>11</sup> Iriye, *Mutual Images*, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Wilkinson, E., *Japan versus the West: Image and Reality* (London: Penguin), 1980.

<sup>13</sup> Lehmann, J. P., *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1859-1905* (London: George Allen & Unwin), 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Yokoyama, T., *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan), 1987.

<sup>15</sup> See a chapter by Daniels in Daniels and Tsuzuki, *op. cit.*

images, both positive and negative, about each other from which, depending on the situation of the day, the relevant image can be recalled which in turn influences reality. The difference is, he added, that Japanese images of Europe have tended to be more positive and closer to reality than European images of Japan.<sup>16</sup> Among such common stereotyped images of Japan are those contributed by a French naval officer, Pierre Loti in his work, *Madam Chrysanthemum*, which emphasizes the exotic and aesthetic aspect of Japan. As to Lehmann, from a standpoint of sympathy towards Japanese efforts for modernisation, he criticizes the West for their images of Japan, which, to him, indicates the Western paternalistic propensity to threaten Japan with a combination of contempt and alarm deriving from its own arrogance and the feeling of white racial superiority.<sup>17</sup> A similar stance is demonstrated to have existed by Richard Tames in *Encounters with Japan*, which is based on writings by visitors to Japan between 1853-1922. While some of the Westerners' comments were friendly enough, nearly all, whether generous, amusing and scornful, were, in Tames' view, patronizing. Among the barriers that hindered the exchange of true information of Japan between the Westerners and Japanese are found to be language, prejudice and preconception.<sup>18</sup>

As with Wilkinson, Yokoyama also maintains that despite the rapid developments in Japan and the increase in British knowledge and understanding of Japanese history and culture, the past ideas about the country continued to survive as they had become so firmly imprinted in the British minds.<sup>19</sup> Daniels in *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations* also suggests the persistence of certain images through time, while adding that others are subjected to many forces such as the countries' socio-economic and political developments and the growth of social and cultural contacts.<sup>20</sup>

In relation to these works on images, this thesis will illustrate that while some British diplomats' views did resemble the stereotyped Western images of Japan, more were based on reality, particularly with regard to social and political changes. The same, however, can not be said about their views of Japan's economic development or military modernisation since the diplomats showed a disinclination to recognize Japan's potential as a modern manufacturing country, a future commercial rival of the West and a military power.

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<sup>16</sup> Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>17</sup> Lehmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Tames, R., *Encounters with Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1991, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Yokoyama, *op. cit.*, p. 2

<sup>20</sup> Daniels, *op. cit.*, in Daniels and Tsuzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

As the thesis also is concerned with the idea of 'Orientalism', a short analysis of the approach of Edward Said and of recent discourse on 'Orientalism' is called for. In *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Said sees 'Orientalism' as a discourse of power formulated to justify the domination of the West over the Eastern countries based on the idea or feeling of inherent or innate Western superiority over the Orient. He also describes 'Orientalism' as an institution 'dealing with the Orient – by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it and ruling it'. In short, 'Orientalism' is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.<sup>21</sup>

Other writers have followed Said's line of approach. For instance, in a series of essays, Marshall Hodgson has argued that 'Orientalism' is a discipline and discourse of power that has perpetuated the dominance of the West over the non-West founded on the belief in the cultural as well as moral superiority of Western Europe to the rest of humanity. Such an idea, in Hodgson's view, was rooted in a distinctively Western notion of world history in which the history of the West is a story of freedom and rationality and the history of the East is a story of despotism and cultural stagnation.<sup>22</sup>

Ziauddin Sardar in his work, *Orientalism*, also shared Said's view that 'Orientalism' is an ideology deployed to justify the assumption of the innate superiority of Europe over the Orient. Using Western civilization as the yardstick to measure Oriental cultures and civilizations, the latter came to signify all that the West is not and is consistently found to be inferior and backward. While the West is expected to experience progresses and changes, the Orient supposedly remains unchanging in its adherence to tradition, and hence remains backward. Rather than based on reality, 'Orientalism,' in Sardar's view, is a constructed ignorance deliberately concocted and manufactured as an instrument to 'contain' and 'manage' Oriental cultures and civilizations - it justified the imperial powers' exploitation of Asian people and their political subjugation.<sup>23</sup>

Also placing stress on the factor of belief in innate Western superiority is V. Kiernan's *The Lords of Human Kind*, which is a history of Western misunderstanding based on accounts of Westerners who had served or been in colonized states. Presented as a survey of the attitudes towards 'inferior races' engendered by European imperialism, it attempts to show that while Western attitudes towards non-Western countries varied, their comments were generally paternalistic, condescending and censorious. Pointing out

<sup>21</sup> Said, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Collected together in Hodgson, M.G., *Rethinking World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press), 1993, p. xv.

<sup>23</sup> Sardar, Ziauddin, *Orientalism* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open Univ. Press), 1999, pp. 3-4, 8, 10.

the relation between such attitudes and the issues of race and class, Kiernan argued that as the Western colonial Powers wanted to preserve their dominance and empires, this had put them under an inner compulsion to believe that the colonized societies inadequate by birth and blood would never be able to manage their own affairs. Hence, only the Powers themselves with their own superior talent could do so.<sup>24</sup>

A more direct study of class and race relations is by Philip Mason in *Prospero's Magic: Some Thoughts on Class and Race*. In this work, which is concerned mainly with the similarities and differences between race and class prejudice, Mason argues that in commanding self-esteem, a European or Westerner would be likely than a non-Westerner to express contempt and assert the superiority of his race over others – that he is superior just because he is white.<sup>25</sup>

Having mentioned some works which support or are in line with Said's, one should, however, note several criticisms of Said's idea of 'Orientalism.' One common criticism is that he presented 'Orientalism' as a monolithic discourse. Said's argument is a massive and complex one in that he deals with 'Orientalists' of different backgrounds including academics, adventurers, bureaucrats, novelists, philosophers, and maintains that 'Orientalism' is not simply a style of thought and set of ideas, but a corporate institution. In contrast to this broad scope of 'Orientalism', his notion of the 'Orient' is limited, since it looks closely at only British and French experience of cultural contacts with the Islamic Middle East. Furthermore, Said is also charged with over-emphasizing the role of imperialism, by concentrating predominantly on how Europe invented the fiction of the 'Orient' and the 'Orientals' and how these representations were used as instruments for control and subjugation in colonialism.

Opting for a different argument from Said's, Bernard Lewis in the essays collected in *Islam and the West*, reasserted the traditional view that 'Orientalism' is actually a neutral, rather innocent, classical and specialized discipline called philology that concerns itself with the discovery, study, publication and interpretation of texts related to the Middle East and surrounding areas. Moreover, he argues that 'Orientalism' has nothing to do with politics and power, and that there is no connection between 'Orientalism' and imperialism or the European acquisition of empires in Asia and Africa.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Kiernan, V. G., *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes towards the Outside World in the Imperial Age* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), 1969, pp. xxviii-xxxi.

<sup>25</sup> Mason, P., *Prospero's Magic: Some Thoughts on Class and Race* (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press), 1962, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, B., *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), 1993, pp. 101, 109, 117-118.

In considering the relevance of Said's 'Orientalism' to Japan, it is important to recognize that when Said refers to the 'Orient', he means the Middle East, which is not only near to Europe and a source of its civilizations and languages, but also its oldest rival. Japan, on the other hand, being among the remotest countries of the Far East, was relatively unknown to the West and there was no actual domination over Japan - Japan unlike most regions of the Middle East, did not become a Western colony. Moreover, there were few cultural ties between the West and Japan, nor did Japan, at least until the twentieth century, pose a special threat to Europe. Unlike the 'Orient' described by Said, which depended on Western representations, Japan did not need the West to discover its own past, its history and its identity. Even in the mid-eighteenth century, Japan was not hopelessly backward as it already showed desire to progress.<sup>27</sup>

Despite these differences between Japan and the 'Orient', still, some Western images of Japan epitomized 'Orientalism' as Said understood it. For instance, images of Japan being a topsy-turvy and absurd country, an Alice in Wonderland world, an exotic land of the East, and a country not worth taking seriously, to name but a few, have found their way into the writings of Westerners on Japan. It is against the background of such a tendency to misunderstand Japan or produce an oversimplified representation of Japan that this thesis will attempt to identify how and to what extent British diplomatic views and images of Meiji Japan in 1868-90 resemble or differ from the kind of 'Orientalism' postulated by Said.

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<sup>27</sup> Richard H. Minear, 'Orientalism and the Study of Japan' in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 3, May 1980, pp. 514-515.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**BRITISH DIPLOMATIC VIEWS OF**  
**THE MEIJI RESTORATION, 1868-71**

1868 was a turning point in the history of modern Japan in that following the overthrow of the Tokugawa Bakufu, a considerable number of key political, social and economic reforms began to be adopted by the new government to effect the dismantling of the centuries-old feudal system. To almost all historians, the period 1868-1871 was a crucial, if not the most crucial stage in the modernisation process of the country. It was a period when political unification and modernisation of the political system, in particular, figured prominently in the agenda of the new government. The fact that Britain is often believed to have been behind the Meiji government in its initial stages, makes it all the more important to examine both the way British diplomats observed developments in Japan during these years and the extent to which they perceived how fundamental the changes which were taking place were.

**The Later Years of the Bakufu Rule**

To British diplomats, Japan under the Bakufu not only practised a feudal political system<sup>1</sup> but also a peculiar system of government. It was peculiar in the sense that religious belief and superstitions were specially formulated to promote the government in power,<sup>2</sup> and there also existed a unique dualistic system: the Shogun (the 'Temporal leader') governed but did not reign while the Emperor (the 'Spiritual leader') was merely a titular sovereign. On the ruling government of Japan, the Tokugawa Bakufu (or Shogunate) itself, Britain's first diplomatic representative in Japan, Rutherford Alcock in particular expressed some 'Orientalist' views as he described the Bakufu as an Oriental government of a 'treacherous and vindictive race'<sup>3</sup> and as Eastern rulers who were jealous and distrustful of foreign relations.<sup>4</sup> He also depicted the Bakufu as consisting of lazy government officials whose sluggishness and ineffectiveness were part of Eastern practice or Oriental diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> Though less forthright than his predecessor, Parkes also expressed his discontent with what he saw as the procrastinating attitude of the Bakufu in matters related to foreigners and foreign trade. Apart from their dissatisfaction with the government's

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<sup>1</sup> Alcock, R., *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of A Three Years' Residence in Japan*, Vol. 2, (London: Longman), 1863, pp. 239-240, 242.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2., p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

supposedly obstructive and monopolistic policy in commerce, the critical diplomatic views were also due to their frustration with the government's inability to curb anti-foreign activities that threatened the lives of foreigners in Japan.

Nevertheless, British diplomats generally showed sympathy towards the Bakufu in its struggle against the Western *daimyo*, particularly of Choshu and Satsuma, as they considered the former to be the stabilising force that could best unify the country. The fact that it was the Bakufu which had in 1858 agreed to sign the treaties opening the country to foreign trade, doubtless influenced their attitudes. The same attitude was held by Chargé d'Affaires Charles Winchester, who observed that only by supporting the Bakufu's cause could foreign relations with Japan rest on a safe foundation.<sup>6</sup> While Parkes felt that it was important for the future of Japan that the three elements of Shogun, Emperor and *daimyo* be reconciled with each other, the former seemed the safest foundation.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Parkes was also convinced that, in effecting political reform, far more might be done through the Shogun than through the *daimyo* as the latter quarrelled among themselves and had no real control over their own territories.<sup>8</sup>

As to the causes of the *daimyo* opposition to the Shogunate, British diplomats observed that besides xenophobia on the part of the *daimyo*, the latter were also discontented with the Bakufu's monopoly of foreign trade and feared that the opening of the port of Hyogo would result in the strengthening of the Shogun's influence at Kyoto.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, British diplomats also noted political dissatisfaction among the *daimyo*, notably those of Choshu and Satsuma, as they wanted to have some share in the administration of the country.<sup>10</sup> Another problem that Parkes saw as crucial in Bakufu-*daimyo* relations was the rivalry between the Bakufu and Choshu: while the Bakufu desired to crush that domain entirely, the *daimyo* of the West had grouped themselves in support of Choshu.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding the general sympathy of British diplomats towards the Bakufu, it is noteworthy that their policy, apart from their actions in 1863-4 against Satsuma and Choshu (to seek reparation from Satsuma and re-open the Shimonoseki Straits – which indirectly strengthened the Bakufu and weakened the anti-foreign

<sup>6</sup> FO 46/53, Winchester to Russell, Yokohama, February 15, 1865.

<sup>7</sup> Daniels, G., *Sir Harry Parkes: British Representative in Japan 1865-83* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library), 1996, p. 53. For British policy in the 1860s, see also Adams, F. O., *The History of Japan* (London: Henry S. King & Co.), 1875; Fox, G., *Britain and Japan 1858-1883* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1969.

<sup>8</sup> FO 46/69, No. 123, Parkes to Clarendon, July 24, 1866.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Parkes Papers, 6/3, Copy, No. 69, H. M. Perseus, November 28, 1865.

<sup>10</sup> FO 391/1, Hammond Papers, Milan, August 25, 1865; FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, August 14, 1866.

<sup>11</sup> FO 46/83, No. 226, Parkes to Stanley, Osaka, December 22, 1867; also see FO 46/82, No. 166, Parkes to Stanley, Yedo, October 1, 1867.



movement) remained one of neutrality. This was in line with the instructions from the Foreign Office which enjoined them not to take sides in any contest between the Shogun and the *daimyo* and to concern themselves mainly with the security of British commercial interests. Historians have often assumed that Britain adopted an anti-Bakufu stance in the internal struggle of the 1860s and the subsequent civil war, and in support of this view they have cited the British government's contact with a Satsuma delegation in London and Parkes's visit to the Satsuma castle-town of Kagoshima in 1866, British arm sales to Satsuma, and alleged signs of partiality in the war between the Bakufu and Choshu in the summer of 1866. In actual fact, however, British diplomats showed no disposition to deviate from the view of Whitehall that any commitment might promote civil war and revive xenophobia among the Japanese against foreigners.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, not all British diplomats were sympathetic towards the Bakufu. In contrast to Alcock, Winchester and Parkes, Legation Secretary Ernest Satow supported the strengthening of the *daimyo* party and favoured the establishment of a new government under the Emperor and he even wrote an anonymous article in a Yokohama newspaper to that effect.<sup>13</sup>

As to future political developments of Japan, British diplomats had suggestions for achieving political reforms. Alcock, for instance, believed in a broader reform involving political concessions from the Shogun to the *daimyo*, though with the former retaining his position as ruler,<sup>14</sup> and he also regretted the want of accord between Emperor and the Shogun.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Winchester recognised as essential the need for some sort of political reform in Japan.<sup>16</sup> When it was proposed in 1866 that a general assembly should be established in Japan, Parkes welcomed the idea since he saw that the assembly could provide a means of effecting an understanding between the Emperor, Shogun and the *daimyo* as to the powers that each should exercise. Apart from providing a peaceful solution to the problem of division of authority in Japan between the Emperor and the Shogun, and to the *daimyo*'s demand for some voice in the administration, Parkes observed that the granting of power to the general assembly could also strengthen the Bakufu, which he regarded as essential to the stability of the country.<sup>17</sup> Satow too expressed his support for political reform but in his case solely because he wished to see the involvement of the *daimyo* party in the administration of the country.

<sup>12</sup> See Daniels, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-51.

<sup>13</sup> PRO 30/33/15/1, Satow Papers, January 8, 1867.

<sup>14</sup> FO 391/1, Hammond Papers, Milan, August 25, 1865.

<sup>15</sup> Cortazzi, H., 'Sir Rutherford Alcock, the first British Minister to Japan 1859-1864: A Reassessment', Lecture to the Asiatic Society of Japan, April 1994, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> FO 46/55, No. 91, Winchester to Russell, Yokohama, May 26, 1865.

<sup>17</sup> FO 46/78, Parkes to Stanley, Yedo, February 28, 1867.

In bringing about political stability in Japan, British diplomats also had suggestions for economic reforms since they believed that commerce would foster political stability and that the widening of commercial opportunities would lessen political discontent among the *daimyo* who had found it difficult to participate in foreign trade. For that reason, the diplomats hoped for the creation of a commercial middle class in Japan. Alcock, for instance, from mid-1864 laid stress on the need for an accommodation between the rival factions in Japan and one way of doing this, he argued to the Bakufu, was through unrestricted free trade.<sup>18</sup> A similar view was expressed by Chargé d'Affaires Winchester when he hinted to the Bakufu that while the Shogun needed foreign support for its continued rule, this might be reversed if the Shogun's trade policy proved to be too conservative.<sup>19</sup> Parkes also adopted the same approach and in line with an instruction from the Foreign Office to impress upon the Bakufu the desirability of 'the creation through the Agency of Commerce of a prosperous and enlightened middle class throughout the whole country,'<sup>20</sup> Parkes repeatedly urged Bakufu officials to abandon the old exclusive system. To advance this policy Parkes sought both a lowering of tariffs and an end to the restrictive measures which, he claimed, hindered Japan's foreign commerce at all levels.<sup>21</sup>

While they encouraged such developments, British diplomats had, nevertheless, some reservations about the Japanese potential ability to achieve change. Alcock, for instance, observed that despite a claim of the existence of a progressive party as opposed to a conservative party in Japan, he doubted that such a party was real. Rather, he believed that the true distinction among Japanese leaders was their degree of opposition to foreigners; those who were timid advocated a temporising policy to gain time for better preparation against foreigners, while the more courageous favoured the immediate expulsion of foreigners by force.<sup>22</sup> While Parkes acknowledged the benefits that the Bakufu might gain in sharing the burden of governing the country with qualified *daimyo*, he was at the same time pessimistic about the likely outcome. When it seemed likely that the *daimyo* would meet to discuss future national policy, Parkes was seriously concerned that the liberal *daimyo* might be out-voted when the implementation of existing treaties was discussed. Furthermore, he was still pessimistic about the ability of the *daimyo* to unite and overcome their mutual jealousies in forming a national assembly<sup>23</sup> and he remained uncertain whether the *daimyo* would be really satisfied with a constitutional

<sup>18</sup> FO 46/45, No. 51, Alcock to Russell, Yokohama, August 25, 1864.

<sup>19</sup> FO 46/55, No. 83, Winchester to Russell, May 11, 1865.

<sup>20</sup> FO 46/63, No. 30, Clarendon to Parkes, Foreign Office, February 20, 1866.

<sup>21</sup> Daniels, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> Alcock, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1., p. 221.

<sup>23</sup> Daniels, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

government, which must involve some surrender of their pretensions: the contemplated changes, in his view, were too vast to be speedily accomplished.<sup>24</sup> Apart from the *daimyo*, there was also likely to be opposition from their samurai retainers, whom Parkes thought likely to cause trouble when some of them came together to participate in the general assembly.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Parkes was also depressed by the impression that the Japanese population at large appeared to have no interest in this political issue, and that their loyalty was only to the Emperor. This meant that any party of progress would have to carry out the additional task of trying to wean the Emperor away from his conservative courtiers and win him to their side.<sup>26</sup> Besides Parkes, Satow also held a pessimistic view as he observed that the council had been called by Tokugawa Keiki not only because he was tired of being harassed by the opposition, but also to give unity to his own camp. Furthermore, Satow maintained that in the event of such a council being established, the ex-Shogun would probably be reinstated by a majority of votes and this would result in his power becoming stronger than it was before.<sup>27</sup> And while Parkes hoped for a peaceful transition following the abdication of Tokugawa Keiki in November 1867, Satow learned from Japanese contacts that a civil war was imminent.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, he maintained that the fact that the assembly had not yet been properly set up might also lead to a war among the *daimyo* as it was probable that any decision reached by the few *daimyo* who were in Kyoto would be protested against by others.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, in foreign trade, Parkes observed the procrastinating attitude on the part of the Bakufu in the opening of the port of Hyogo. He also felt that despite the *daimyo*'s wish for trade, they were averse to opening their own harbours and tended to be opposed to the settlement of foreigners.<sup>30</sup> In Satsuma's case, Parkes maintained that his main motivation in opposing the Shogunate seemed to be his personal ambition in rather than the need for the expansion of trade.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Japanese Civil War**

As far as the knowledge of British diplomats of the Meiji Ishin is concerned, while British Minister Parkes was aware of the increasing opposition by several

<sup>24</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yedo, December 16, 1867.

<sup>25</sup> Parkes Papers, 2/F14, Private, Parkes to Flowers, Yokohama, November 23, 1867; also see FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yedo, November 28, 1867.

<sup>26</sup> Daniels, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow Papers, December 7, 1867.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, December 14, 1867; *Ibid.*, December 20, 1867; *Ibid.*, December 24, 1867.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, December 18, 1867.

<sup>30</sup> Daniels, *op. cit.*, p. 45. Parkes, for instance, noted that the *daimyo* in Kyushu were reported to fear that the opening of Hyogo might interfere with the prosperity of Nagasaki in which, as the port nearest to their territories, they had a more direct interest. FO 46/78, No. 8, Parkes to Stanley, Yedo, January 18, 1867.

<sup>31</sup> Daniels, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

leading Western *han* against the Shogun's government, nothing his dispatches suggests that he was anticipating a drastic movement by the Western *daimyo* and their influential retainers to overthrow the regime in early January of 1868. Even more surprisingly, the same was also true of Secretary of Legation Ernest Satow, who, although he had a close friendship with some of the anti-Bakufu samurai and noted the sense of looming political crisis, did not foresee that it would break out so soon into a civil war. This is demonstrated in his intention on January 1, 1868 to effect a conciliation between the rival factions through the mediation of Parkes.<sup>32</sup> Even after the coup had taken place, British diplomats were left in the dark about the actual events in Kyoto where the Shogun's opponents had seized control of the palace and the Emperor and had had an Imperial Decree issued abolishing the office of Shogun. Only rumours were available concerning the event. Perhaps because the Shogun's earlier abdication had brought no obvious changes in the management of diplomacy, it was difficult for Western diplomats to judge whether there would now be any drastic change in the existing form of government.<sup>33</sup> It was not until January 6 that the Legation was informed of what had been happening in Kyoto by a Bakufu official, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Ishikawa Kawachi no Kami.<sup>34</sup>

In explaining the driving motive of the party that launched the coup d'état, Parkes in a dispatch of January, observed that not only did the leading *daimyo* party not believe in the sincerity of the Shogun in surrendering his political power to the Mikado, but they also saw the Shogun's proposal for the assembly 'as a plan to bring him in again to a chief if not sovereign position by the vote of a small packed assembly.'<sup>35</sup> Satow also shared this view, writing on January 14 that 'the Taikun's idea of a general council was one in which by the majority he was certain of, he could feel sure of getting a vote reinstating him in his power authority. This was his stratagem and it has failed of course through Satsuma's bold stroke of getting possession of the Mikado's person.'<sup>36</sup> In addition, from his earlier conversation with Kuroda Shinyemon and Koba Dainori of the *daimyo* party, Satow observed that the protest of more than a dozen other *han*, who opposed the Shogun's returning of sovereign power into the hands of the Mikado, also contributed to the decisive action by the Western *han*, and this explained why they 'were in such a hurry; they wanted to do their work before others could come up.'<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, in contrast to these views, a wholly different reason was given by Iwakura Tomomi to Chargé d'Affaires Francis Adams in 1871,

<sup>32</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 1, 1868.

<sup>33</sup> Daniels, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>34</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 6, 1868.

<sup>35</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Osaka, January 10, 1868; also see FO 410/12, No. 5, Parkes to Stanley, Osaka, January 5, 1868.

<sup>36</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 14, 1868.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, January 12, 1868.

when he pointed to the *Dai Nihon Shi* as the main cause for the Ishin. According to the Japanese statesman,

...it was a mistake to suppose, that the notion of restoring the governing Power into the hands of the Mikado was a thing of yesterday. More than 150 years ago...this principle was broached in a history of Japan contained in 100 Volumes published by the then Prince of Mito. This book had been extensively read throughout Japan, its leading idea had germinated in the minds of men, had grown in strength with every succeeding generation, and had thus been the principal cause of the events of 1868.<sup>38</sup>

Amidst rumours of possible fighting between the Mikado and Tokugawa forces, Parkes observed in early January that though a civil war was to be regretted, it was nevertheless, inevitable as a means to end corruption.<sup>39</sup> Later in July, he further observed that the fighting would pave the way for the establishment of a centralised government:

I also think that until the parties have had an opportunity of measuring their strength in several sharp fights there is little chance of an adjustment of affair being carried out...I suppose too, that in Japan as elsewhere, the weakening of the baronial forces must precede the establishment of a central Power.<sup>40</sup>

Satow too, while he preferred a peaceful settlement between the rival forces, did not rule out the possibility that civil war might bring about political changes in Japan. As he wrote following a conversation with Kuroda Shinyemon on January 10, 'I advised them not to fight [the Tycoon] if they could help it, but if they felt it necessary to do it at once.'<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, as a civil war broke out and dragged on, Parkes expressed his concern that prolonged fighting might result in Russian encroachment of Japanese territory.<sup>42</sup> This followed a report by Vice-Admiral Henry Keppel from his cruise in the Gulf of Tartary that Russia had renewed her aggression to annex the Southern island of the Kurile group and that this might lead to the occupation of Iturup and Hokkaido.<sup>43</sup>

As to whether British diplomats directly involved themselves in the Meiji Ishin, none of Parkes's dispatches gives such evidence. His views and actions were consistent with his advocacy of a non-interference policy. A few days after the Meiji Ishin, Parkes observed to Under Secretary of State Edmund Hammond that while the

<sup>38</sup> FO 46/141, No. 73, Adams to Granville, Yedo, September 15, 1871.

<sup>39</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Osaka, January 10, 1868.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Yokohama, July 10, 1868.

<sup>41</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 10, 1868.

<sup>42</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, September 12, 1868.

<sup>43</sup> FO 410/12, No. 216, Conf., Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, September 5, 1868. See the encl. Keppel's report to Admiralty, August 23, 1868.

French Minister in Japan, Leon Roches, had continued to cultivate the idea that the Shogun could be brought back to power and was urging that what was going on at Kyoto was a revolt against the regular government, he himself had declined to accept such a view or 'to exhibit the least desire to interfere' and 'shall be as ready as any one else to open relations with the new administration, whether directed by the Tycoon or whoever may be duly appointed for the purpose.'<sup>44</sup> Moreover, in February, in response to a request by Prince Higashi-Kuze, the Mikado's envoy, for the observance of strict neutrality on the part of Britain,<sup>45</sup> Parkes issued a general notification to British subjects at different open ports in Japan prohibiting any involvement in the civil war;<sup>46</sup> and he re-issued it in July, following an official instruction from Foreign Secretary Lord Stanley.<sup>47</sup> Another proof may also be seen in his refusal to meet the request of the new government in December 1868 to assist in arranging for Yamaguchi Hanzo, its representative, to secure passage on board an English vessel to Hakodate to go and treat with the rebels. To the officials who made the request, he defended his action on the ground of maintaining neutrality on the part of Britain.<sup>48</sup> As the fighting came to an end in mid-1869, Parkes attributed the better position gained by Britain in Japan, as opposed to that of France, to the observance of strict neutrality during the Japanese civil war:

The great 'Mission Militaire' of M. Roches which was to have made Japan French is now ended, & has been accompanied with very different results to those hoped for by its projector. I trust I may say without vanity that British influence, from having aimed only at legitimate ends, has not sustained any similar defeat & occupies a position that is worthy of it.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, as has been mentioned before, the same neutrality could not perhaps be said about Satow, whose close connection with some individuals of the *daimyo* party might have influenced his conduct in relation to the Meiji Ishin, in that he clearly expressed his support to the anti-Tokugawa party. This is evident in an article entitled the '*Sakuron*', which he published in 1867 in the *Japan Times*, promoting the cause of the *daimyo* party and suggesting direct relations between Britain and the Mikado.<sup>50</sup>

As to signs of modernising interest on the part of Japanese during the civil war, diplomats noted the employment of Western weaponry such as rifles and guns

<sup>44</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Osaka, January 5, 1868.

<sup>45</sup> FO 46/122, No. 29, Parkes to Stanley, Hyogo, February 15, 1868.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 40, February 25, 1868.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 174, Yokohama, July 22, 1868; *Ibid.*, No. 61, Draft, Foreign Office to Parkes, April 24, 1868.

<sup>48</sup> PRO 30/33/15/3, Satow's Diary, December 21, 1868. Instead, Parkes advised the Mikado officials to send a coolie in a boat from Awamori with a letter offering to treat with the Tokugawa rebels.

<sup>49</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, June 26, 1869.

<sup>50</sup> Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249; Checkland, O., *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912* (London: MacMillan Press), 1989, pp. 8, 12.

alongside traditional swords and lances by both Imperial and Tokugawa forces. In his diary, Satow noted that Japanese with whom he had spoken considered the more widespread and effective use of modern arms by the Imperial forces to have been a decisive factor in their victory over the Tokugawa forces at the battle of Fushimi.<sup>51</sup> In mentioning the Japanese interest in modern weapons, however, Satow showed no surprise, as he was already aware that the Japanese had, during the closing years of the Bakufu, been involved in the purchase of arms from foreign merchants.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, Satow was not impressed with the military appearance of the Japanese forces. Of the procession of Mikado's soldiers into Tokyo in November 1868, he wrote, 'It was not splendid, because the effect of what was Oriental was marred by the horribly untidy soldiers with unkempt hair & clothes vilely imitated from the West.'<sup>53</sup> A similar comment was made on the Shogun's drilled soldiers, retreating to Osaka in January 1868. To Satow, they did not present a very martial appearance, and he described them as 'a herd of men in fantastic costumes, some wearing helmets with long wigs of black or white hair reaching down to the middle of their backs, others in ordinary helmets, jingasa, flat hats, & armed some with long spears, short spears, Spencer rifles, Swiss rifles, muskets, or plain two swords.'<sup>54</sup>

While Parkes also noted the Japanese interest in modern weaponry during the civil war, he dealt more with the importation of arms at Niigata. For example, in reporting on the ongoing state of war in the neighbourhood of Niigata, Parkes observed that the *daimyo* of Aizu, one of the Tokugawa's staunchest supporters, was not averse to the arrival of foreign ships at the port as their appearance would facilitate the importation of arms.<sup>55</sup> In a later dispatch, he observed that the sale of arms at Niigata appeared to form 'a more substantial object of trade in that quarter' than the purchase of silkworm eggs.<sup>56</sup> Satow also reported transactions of arms between foreigners and Japanese, yet in a different perspective, he noted complaints by the new Mikado's government not only of foreigners selling guns to the Tokugawa rebels at Niigata, but also of the indifference shown by foreign ministers, despite the government's request to put a stop to the illegal trade. In response, Satow advised the government to issue a notification proclaiming a blockade at the port<sup>57</sup> - a suggestion,

<sup>51</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, February 1, 1868; *ibid.*, February 5 and February 17, 1868.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, October 12, 1867; For increasing Japanese interest in modern weapons during the Bakufu period, see Harries, M. and Harries, S., *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army 1868-1945* (London: Heinemann), 1991, pp. 5-7, 9.

<sup>53</sup> PRO 30/33/15/3, Satow's Diary, November 26, 1868.

<sup>54</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 7, 1868.

<sup>55</sup> FO 46/94, No. 147, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, June 26, 1868.

<sup>56</sup> FO 46/96, No. 219, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, September 5, 1868.

<sup>57</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, August 21, 1868.

which was later adopted by the Japanese government.

### The Establishment of the New Administration

Regarding the new Imperial government that came to power in January 1868, British diplomats showed themselves to be fundamentally favourable but cautious. During the initial stage of its formation, British diplomats had had some doubts of its strength and power as they observed a lack of unity and mutual rivalry among the Imperial forces, which included Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa and Hizen. In a private letter of January 10, 1868 to Hammond, Parkes mentioned that 'whether strengthening themselves or becoming isolated, I am as yet wholly unable to say.'<sup>58</sup> Given the well-known fact that Satsuma and Choshu had long been a rival to one another, Parkes's statement is not surprising. Besides, as he noted in another dispatch, the leading *daimyo*, who were responsible for the coup, 'represent a considerable diversity of interest.'<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Parkes may have also reflected on the remarks by the ex-Shogun, who, during an interview with both Parkes and Roches after his withdrawal to Osaka, maintained that Kyoto was occupied by 'a set of men who did nothing but quarrel among themselves, anything but govern.'<sup>60</sup> Moreover, a number of Japanese officials spoke to Parkes of the dissatisfaction felt by some other *daimyo* with the high-handed proceedings of Satsuma against the ex-Shogun. From Ishikawa no Kami, Parkes gained information that not only was the Satsuma proposal in early January to abolish the Shogunate and the traditional offices of *Kampaku*, *Tenso* and *Giso*, and to establish in their places, the *Sōsai*, *Gijō* and *Sanyo*, opposed by *fudai daimyo*, the adherents of the ex-Shogun, but also some of the *Kokushi*, or highest order of *daimyo*, who argued that if such sweeping changes were suddenly introduced, the highest and oldest institutions in the country, including the position of the Emperor, could not be considered safe.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Satsuma's action in fighting the Tokugawa forces at Toba-Fushimi was also reported to have caused some dissatisfaction among those *daimyo* who favoured a more conciliatory policy towards the ex-Shogun.<sup>62</sup>

Parkes made no specific comments on the establishment of *Sōsai*, *Gijō* and *Sanyo*, but in a conversation with Iwakura he expressed the view that Japan should adopt a gradual policy towards centralisation by taking into account local needs and circumstances. Parkes's view is worthy of note as it resembled the gradualist policy of

<sup>58</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Osaka, January 10, 1868.

<sup>59</sup> FO 46/91, No. 9, Parkes to Stanley, Osaka, January 10, 1868.

<sup>60</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 8, 1868.

<sup>61</sup> FO 46/91, Parkes to Stanley, Osaka, January 10, 1868; also see FO 410/12, No. 9, Parkes to Stanley, Osaka, January 10, 1868; PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 6, 1868.

<sup>62</sup> From conversations between Parkes and several Japanese officials as recorded in PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 28, 1868; *ibid.*, January 29, 1868.



some Meiji leaders. In response to a query by Iwakura on January 9 as to what direction the Japanese government might profitably adopt with regard to Western institutions in view of the inferiority of Japanese civilization in many respects, Parkes replied that

It may not be desirable however that those changes should be too rapidly made or that all the institutions of foreign countries should be found suited to the actual condition of Japan. It would be better that improvement should be grafted upon the old stock rather than [that] the latter should be destroyed in order to make way for novelties. The government of the country having now been reconstituted under the Mikado, it is obvious that the latter must be supported by a central organisation and by material power; and although much may still be left to local administration, still certain cardinal functions of government such as legislation, national defences, foreign affairs &c. should be conducted from the centre, and means should be found to correct the disintegration which has so long been the leading feature in the Japanese polity.<sup>63</sup>

From his close friendship with Japanese officials, Satow also noted the disharmonious relations within the Imperial party. Not only had some Japanese officials spoken of this,<sup>64</sup> but there was also a written document<sup>65</sup> attesting to the feeling of dissatisfaction of other *daimyo* with Satsuma's action and the division within the party. Regarding Satsuma's proposal for changes in the political structure, Satow's comments are significant since he compared the proposed offices with Western institutions in Britain; the *Sōsai*, in his view, might be seen as similar to Secretaries of State, the *Gijō* resembled a Cabinet, and finally the *Sanyo* were similar to Under Secretaries of State. Referring to his previous conversations with Goto of Tosa on the British political system, he added that the reform 'looks marvellously like the hints we gave to Goto Shojiro about forming an executive'.<sup>66</sup> (Neither he nor Parkes, however, showed an awareness that the proposed reforms were in reality based on a pre-feudal model, the Taiho Code of 701-04 A.D.<sup>67</sup>) However, despite what he saw as positive signs towards the modernisation of political institutions in Japan, Satow remained skeptical of the solidarity of the men in power. From his

<sup>63</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, January 30, 1869.

<sup>64</sup> On January 7, 1868 Satow was informed by Toshima, a *karō* of Tosa, that the *daimyo* were divided where by in dealing with the Shogun, Satsuma wanted to do everything by main force, Tosa by reason. PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 7, 1868.

<sup>65</sup> On January 10, 1868 Ishikawa Kawachi no Kami brought him a document which appeared to be a protest by the retainers of Awa, Hizen, Higo, Chikuzen and the other great *daimyo* against the violence of Satsuma and his party in staging the sudden coup on January 3 and in eliminating the *daimyo* council, in which *daimyo* and the ex-Shogun could peacefully deliberate on political matters. *Ibid.*, January 10, 1868.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, January 6, 1868. For details on the structure and power of the administrative reform, see McLaren, W. W., *A Political History of Japan During the Meiji Era 1867-1912* (London: Frank Cass) (reprint) 1965, pp. 59-60; Beasley, W. G., *The Meiji Restoration* (London: Oxford Univ. Press), 1973, p. 318.

<sup>67</sup> McLaren, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

conversation with Goto Shojiro, Yoshii Kosuke and Saionji in February 1868, Satow recorded in his diary that it appeared that 'it is by no means decided as yet who is to be what, and that the chief men find it rather difficult to manage each other' since 'the jealousy of each other & especially of Satsuma prevents their working together.'<sup>68</sup>

When a new structure was proposed in February 1868, which included the establishment of seven departments, namely the Ecclesiastical, Home, Foreign Affairs, War, Finance, Judiciary and Legislation Department - each to be headed by appointed *daimyo* -, and the participation of retainers of the *daimyo* in a deliberative assembly, a fairly positive view was forthcoming from Parkes. As he put it: 'It must be granted that in the formation of a new Constitution the reforming party have set themselves an onerous task which will require time for its accomplishment, but there is reason to hope that it will be attended, in the end, with beneficial results.' The slow process that would necessarily take place before the success of the reform, he thought, was mainly due to the jealousies among the *daimyo*.<sup>69</sup>

By March, though he still observed the problem of solidarity among the *daimyo*, Parkes's comments indicate a growing confidence in the Imperial party. To Hammond, Parkes wrote that he was 'confident that good will come out of this movement'<sup>70</sup> and that a responsible government might materialise.<sup>71</sup> Again, when two officials were sent by the new regime in mid-April to begin a formal communication with the Legation, Parkes observed that though these officials might not at first give satisfaction, particularly in matters related to foreign trade, 'I trust we may see a competent & responsible Government.'<sup>72</sup> A still more positive comment was made following the publication in April 1868 by the government of political documents on the deliberative duties of *Sōsai*, *Gijō* and *Sanyō*, the executive functions of eight state departments, and the consultative general assembly known as the *Kōshū*. As Parkes put it, 'they furnish convincing proof of vigor, intelligence, & sound organisation, on the part of the new administration...The boldness of the language in which the reform of the old institutions is advocated and free discussion invited, both on Home and Foreign Affairs, is deserving of much admiration.'<sup>73</sup> Surprisingly, in reporting the reforms in April, Parkes made no mention of the important Charter Oath promulgated on April 6, 1868. Nor was there any report on the Oath by Satow.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, February 20, 1868.

<sup>69</sup> FO 46/91, No. 43, Parkes to Stanley, Hyogo, February 25, 1868. For more details on the governmental reorganization in February 1868, see McLaren, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>70</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Hyogo, March 11, 1868.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, Yokohama, April 9, 1868.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, April 18, 1868.

<sup>73</sup> FO 46/93, No. 80, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, April 18, 1868.

<sup>74</sup> For details on the oath see e.g., Umegaki, M., *After the Restoration: The Beginning of Japan's Modern State* (New York: New York Univ. Press), 1998, pp. 52-58; Beasley, W. G., 'Meiji Political

Nevertheless, when the Tokugawa forces in Northern Japan began a new assault on the Meiji government in the mid-1868, Parkes's views somewhat changed, indicating the uncertainties in Japan. Although he observed that the sense of danger that resulted from the opposition movement might contribute to more cohesion among the Imperial party,<sup>75</sup> he also felt that the government still lacked the unity and resources needed to create a strong government. As he wrote to Hammond on June 27, 1868:

The Japanese love to act in a desultory & uncertain way & to leave it as much as possible to events to bring about their own solutions. It is most difficult to find out what is going on - chiefly because there are so many little actions and so few great ones & all of them wishing apparently to play independent parts. Unless some means can be hit upon to create more adhesion among parties I shall be afraid that a long period of discord is before us.<sup>76</sup>

Parkes further observed that not only was the new government suffering from a financial problem in that it did not yet have an Imperial treasury, but it also lacked qualified men as the *daimyo* as a class did not have sufficient administrative skills. The best administrators, in Parkes's views, were to be found among the principal retainers of the *daimyo*.<sup>77</sup> It is significant that in writing these reports, Parkes (like Satow<sup>78</sup>) showed no interest in making comments on the extensive administrative reform in June 1868 known as the *Seitaisho*, which entailed the re-distribution of government posts and a great reduction in the number of officials and concentrated power into the hands of a few *han*, notably Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa and Hizen.<sup>79</sup> Parkes's subsequent dispatches further indicate the difficulty of the government in getting effective cooperation from the *daimyo*. This prompted Parkes to conclude that 'The growth of a Government in a country where the elements of government do not exist must necessarily be slow.'<sup>80</sup> Satow, on the other hand, noted the introduction in December 1868 of the system of promotion by merit and ability by the government in the place of the old hereditary office holding,<sup>81</sup> yet he made no connection between

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Institutions', in Jansen, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press) Vol. 5., 1989, pp. 623-624.

<sup>75</sup> FO 46/94, No. 139, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, June 19, 1868.

<sup>76</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, June 27, 1868.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> It was only later that Satow commented on the *Seitaisho* in his work, in which he maintained that the constitution showed marked traces of American political theories and that some of its provisions seemed to him like 'spoils systems'. He also observed that many appointments to high offices were held by dummies of high birth though the real work was done by their retainers. Satow, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-377, 381.

<sup>79</sup> For details on the *Seitaisho*, see McLaren, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-66; Beasley, W.G., *The Modern History of Japan* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co.), 1963, p. 102.

<sup>80</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, August 8, 1868.

<sup>81</sup> PRO 30/33/15/3, Satow's Diary, December 16, 1868.

this reform and the government's efforts to effect uniformity in local administration in cities and *han*.<sup>82</sup>

One modernising reform that attracted much comment from British diplomats was the establishment of a general assembly of *daimyo* and leading samurai. Having been proposed in 1868, the assembly commenced its first session in mid-May 1869. Parkes's comments prior to its inauguration indicate his positive expectations. As he stated to Hammond in April 1869, 'I cordially wish them success & view with deep interest their efforts to give order & consistency to their proceedings.'<sup>83</sup> Parkes's attitude is not surprising when one remembers that he had already encouraged the establishment of representative government or more like a baronial council in Japan during the closing years of the Bakufu, with the Shogun sharing political power with the *daimyo*.<sup>84</sup>

In contrast to Parkes, Satow had at first had expressed some scepticisms with regard to the idea of representative government in Japan. In reply to a remark by a Japanese *karō*, Toshima in January 1868 that Goto Shojiro's plan for representative system was good but that Japan was not yet ripe for such a change, Satow said, 'I agree too that a system of representative government would be a curious change...from the hitherto existing despotic form.' Instead, he saw some sort of a council, which included the ex-Shogun, as more suitable to Japan, though he suspected that the *daimyo* party wished to exclude the ex-Shogun and destroy the office altogether.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, six weeks later, when Goto Shojiro lamented that 'he despaired of getting a deliberative assembly because the majority would always be stupid & wrongheaded,' Satow advised him to experiment with the assembly anyway, adding that 'if they [the assembly members] did run their heads against a block they would learn wisdom by it.'<sup>86</sup> In explaining his changed attitude, one can only speculate. Satow may have at first felt unsure of the ability of the *daimyo* party to make a representative system work in view of their lack of unity, but subsequently may have seen evidence of determination on the part of the new government, as shown in the more elaborated administrative reforms undertaken in February 1868.

Parkes welcomed the creation of the assembly for several reasons. One reason, as he pointed out in mid-1869, was because it served as a peaceful means to unite different views in Japan.<sup>87</sup> The fact that the subjects for debates were chosen by the government, in Parkes's view, also meant that the assembly might prove to be 'an

<sup>82</sup> Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, p. 328.

<sup>83</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, April 13, 1869.

<sup>84</sup> FO 410/12, Conf., No. 205, Parkes to Stanley, Yedo, December 5, 1867; also see FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, October 31, 1866 and *Ibid.*, Yedo, January 10, 1867.

<sup>85</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 7, 1868.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, February 20, 1868.

<sup>87</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, July 12, 1869.

useful instrument in promoting the establishment of united and regular Government,' in that the members might become more susceptible to the importance of carrying out necessary reforms towards a centralised administration.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, as 'a vent for discussion,' the assembly, as he saw it, could also tone down the anti-foreign views of the reactionary or conservative party.<sup>89</sup> One final factor that may have contributed to Parkes's view was his desire for Japan to adopt a system based on the British parliamentary system. This is evident from the observation in Satow's diary that during a visit to the ex-Shogun at Osaka on January 15, 1868, Parkes brought up the topic of the British Constitution.<sup>90</sup>

On the capacity of the assembly members to participate in the debates concerning Japanese national policy, Parkes observed that despite their lack of experience, some showed good sense and thoughtfulness in their speeches. For instance, with regard to the question of foreign commerce, Parkes wrote that 'In judging of it we have to bear in mind the limited experience of the speakers on commercial matters and on business generally, and although some of the opinions are crude and absurd, others again are marked by common sense and liberality.'<sup>91</sup> Similar commendation was also forthcoming on more sensitive issues such as Christianity, on which he noted that the debate showed that 'even in their hastily improvised parliament, the Japanese have men who can take an intelligent & moderate view on such an exciting & delicate subject as that of religion.'<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, Parkes did have some reservations about the working of the assembly, particularly regarding the inefficiency of its highest-ranking members. As he put it in April 1869, 'The Daimios who in most cases have had but slight experience of the earnest business of life were not eager to devote themselves to the labours of an onerous and voluntary office.' As a result, it became necessary that practical and able men were selected from the *daimyo*'s retainers, who were really the administrators of the affairs of the *han*. Even then, he concluded that the way in which the system would develop could not easily be foreseen: 'It remains to be seen in what degree the action of the representatives will be separated from that of their Chiefs, or whether the latter will agree to form themselves into another and a higher chamber, and thus take that part in the legislation of the nation to which, if willing to exercise it they are naturally entitled by this superior Rank.'<sup>93</sup> In a later dispatch in June, Parkes again saw the assembly's future development as a necessarily gradual process. In view

<sup>88</sup> FO 46/110, No. 138, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, June 26, 1869.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*; FO 46/111, No. 155, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, August 9, 1869.

<sup>90</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 15, 1868.

<sup>91</sup> FO 46/110, No. 143, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, July 12, 1869.

<sup>92</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, August 9, 1869.

<sup>93</sup> FO 46/108, No. 86, Parkes to Clarendon, Yokohama, April 13, 1869.

of the 'very imperfectly organized' state of the assembly, he wrote, 'I need not observe that time must elapse before these proceedings can assume a definitive shape or the functions of the assembly be clearly defined. At the present date and probably for some time to come it can be regarded as little more than a tentative measure - as the mere germ of an institution which can only be developed by experience.'<sup>94</sup> A more lengthy comment on the shortcomings of the assembly may be found in Parkes's report of August 1869, in which he asserted that not only were the assembly's members 'elected more or less arbitrarily,' but also 'Legislative functions do not appear to have been conferred upon the assembly, and the Government reserve to themselves the right of considering all the opinions sent up to them by the members, whether given singly or collectively, and of determining how far these should be carried out into effect.' Given these imperfections, Parkes again emphasized the need for time and experience before the assembly could operate effectively.<sup>95</sup> His reservations were far less, though, than those which the Meiji government came to have: it abandoned its experiment with consultation in 1870 and the assembly was abolished in October 1871.

### **The Consolidation of the Meiji Government**

In creating a new modern and strong Japan, the Meiji leaders undertook a range of measures which aimed at the centralisation and consolidation of the country, for they knew that political unification was a prerequisite for modernisation. One was the establishment of the supreme role of the Emperor as the real Sovereign through the abandonment by the Court of some of its ancient customs and practices. Instead of shutting himself away in the Kyoto palace far from the gaze of his subjects, the Emperor began to appear in public and participate in important state functions. This elicited favourable comments by British diplomats. Following his first audience with the Mikado in Kyoto on March 26, 1868, Parkes observed that unlike the previous practice where the Japanese Sovereign was 'kept in the strictest seclusion and regarded as a demigod by his people,' the Emperor 'has now for the first time placed himself in communication with the outer world.'<sup>96</sup> A lengthy positive view of this 'striking innovation'<sup>97</sup> was recorded by Parkes after the audience of the foreign

<sup>94</sup> FO 46/110, No. 138, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, June 26, 1869.

<sup>95</sup> FO 46/111, No. 155, Parkes to Clarendon, Yokohama, August 9, 1869.

<sup>96</sup> FO 46/92, No. 66, Parkes to Stanley, Kyoto, March 26, 1868.

<sup>97</sup> FO 46/98, No. 283, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, November 13, 1869. See the article by Breen, J., 'The Rituals of Anglo-Japanese Diplomacy: Imperial Audiences in Early Meiji Japan' in Daniels, G. and Tsuzuki, C. (eds.), *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000* (Palgrave), 2002, pp. 65-66, 70-74.

representatives with the Emperor in Tokyo on January 5, 1869. As he reported to Lord Stanley:

I must confess, My Lord, to a feeling of some admiration on observing the sensible and unostentatious way in which this sovereign - accustomed to think of himself and a long line of ancestors as demi-gods - addresses himself, upon the advice of his councillors, to the practical duties of his new station. No attempt at compromise between his former pseudo sacred and his present secular position appears to be attempted. The object aimed at seems to be that he shall be known as a sovereign possessing no exceptional or unnatural attributes but charged with the welfare of some millions of his fellow beings whose interests he is to watch over by the aid of national advisers.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, no similar awareness was shown by British diplomats of such measures to enhance the people's reverence for the Emperor and obedience to the will of the Court as the prominent position given to the Department of Shinto (*Jingikan*) over other state departments in 1869, and the emphasis on Shinto through the Great Teaching Promulgation campaign, which began in 1870.<sup>99</sup>

Another important change towards centralisation was the movement of the capital from Kyoto to Edo (later renamed Tokyo). The plan was first announced by the government in August 1868. This was welcomed by British diplomats not only because Tokyo, as Parkes mentioned to Hammond in 1868, was seen as superior to Kyoto,<sup>100</sup> but more importantly, it would enable the new government to govern the country effectively, especially in view of the opposition of the Northern *daimyo* against the Mikado's government. The latter purpose was confirmed by Inoue Iwami, who stated to Satow on August 22 that he thought the Mikado must come to Tokyo and make it his capital or the Northern rebels could not be kept in order.<sup>101</sup> In a conversation with some government officials in October, Parkes was informed that the 'thirteen states' which formed the Northern portion of Japan and comprised about one third of its territory were too remote to be conveniently ruled from Kyoto.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, as rightly observed by Parkes, the question could not be easily solved, as the conservative party who 'cling fast to Kioto which is a second Mecca to them,' objected to the departure of the Mikado to the new capital.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, when the Mikado finally departed for Tokyo in November 1868, Parkes described the move as

<sup>98</sup> FO 46/106, No. 15, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, January 26, 1869.

<sup>99</sup> On the *Jingikan*, see Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, p. 321. On the Promulgation Campaign, see e.g., M. and S. Harries, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>100</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, August 8, 1868; *Ibid*, August 12, 1868.

<sup>101</sup> PRO 30/331/5/2, Satow's Diary, August 22, 1868.

<sup>102</sup> FO 46/97, No. 243, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, October 7, 1868.

<sup>103</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, August 8, 1868.

a 'healthy indication of a growth of power'<sup>104</sup> and stated that if Tokyo was successfully made a capital, it meant that 'another great step will have been made towards the solution of difficulties, & the establishment of a consolidated power.'<sup>105</sup> Parkes's positive comments on the movement of the capital were also partly motivated by the question of the security of foreigners in Japan, as Kyoto was known to be the centre of the conservative or reactionary party.<sup>106</sup> In relation to foreign interests, Parkes may have also welcomed the step because the new capital was nearer to Yokohama which symbolized Western interests. Not only would this make it easier for the foreign diplomats to exert their influence and pressure upon the new government, but it also meant that the Japanese authorities would be more aware of foreign needs. However, no such reasoning is to be found in British diplomatic reports.

Another important requirement for a centralised Meiji government was the establishment of an Imperial treasury. In this context, British diplomats noted that one difficulty faced by the Meiji government in 1868 was the refusal of the ex-Shogun and his followers to the government's demand for the surrender by the ex-Shogun of large areas of his territory to form the basis of national treasury.<sup>107</sup> Their anticipation that the issue would not be settled without a fight proved to be true, and only after the defeat at Toba-Fushimi did the ex-Shogun surrender his territory to the new government. In addition to the ex-Shogun's lands, Satow reported, following a conversation with Terajima Munenori in January 1868, that Tosa and some other *han* had also proposed that each *daimyo* should give up a smaller proportion of their territory to form the nucleus of a national treasury, but that the plan was opposed by Satsuma.<sup>108</sup>

Despite his initial reluctance, Shimazu Hisamitsu, the father of the Satsuma *daimyo* did finally join the lords of Choshu, Tosa and Hizen in presenting a memorial of March 1869, submitting their men, revenue and lands to the Mikado, and in July all *daimyo* were appointed governors (*Chiji*) of their respective *han*. British diplomats praised the measure as a further consolidation of the new government. Already in February 1868, when reporting on the efforts by several leading Choshu samurai to persuade their lord to join in presenting the memorial, Satow had expressed the view that 'If all the daimios would do this, a powerful govt. might be formed, which is impossible under the present system. Japan can't be strong when every daimio can

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, November 13, 1868.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, November 18, 1868.

<sup>106</sup> FO 46/108, No. 95, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, April 29, 1869.

<sup>107</sup> E.g., FO 46/91, No. 43, Parkes to Stanley, Hyogo, February 25, 1868.

<sup>108</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, January 14, 1868. Satow did not note that some of Satsuma's leading samurai, particularly Okubo, favoured the idea of the surrender of the *han*; Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, p. 329.



withdraw his assistance at pleasure, & when each prince drills his men after a different fashion. It's the story of the German confederation over again: they must all be swallowed up in something bigger.<sup>109</sup> Like Satow, Parkes had also favoured the consolidation of Japan through the abolition of feudal privileges of the *han*, which included the possession of independent armed bodies. As he observed in December 1868, the disorder among the followers of the *daimyo* should be seen by the government as a weakness arising from the feudal practice of retaining independent military bodies.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, following the issuance of the joint memorial, Parkes positively wrote: 'I am glad to say that light breaks out through the cloud. Satsuma, Choshu & several of the leading Daimos have come forward & offered to surrender the government of their own territories - their revenue, forces - ...into the hands of the Mikado's Govt. in order that a strong central Power may be created. This is a substantial step in the right direction.'<sup>111</sup>

Nevertheless, as to whether the measure would be peacefully accepted by the people of Japan, Parkes at first had some doubts. This was because, he observed, not only would the measure entail a great magnitude of changes, but there were also some hostile elements in the country, especially the armed samurai, whose discontent might be expected, as they would be greatly affected by the changes. On the commencement of the deliberation on the question in the general assembly at Tokyo, Parkes wrote in a private letter to Hammond dated May 28, 1869:

If the work of consolidation goes on we may hope to see the Government supported by effective power, & able to maintain peace and order. But the interests affected by the proposed changes are so great & manifold that it is very difficult to foretell the result of these deliberations. The movement amounts to a remodelling of all the institutions of the country & should of course be deliberately proceeded with. But when was it found possible to divest a revolution of strife and excitement! There is less of it in Japan than might have been looked for, considering the looseness of the restraint exercised over the armed or dangerous class.<sup>112</sup>

In another instance, in response to a query by the Foreign Office on his opinion as to the necessity of the maintenance of British forces in Japan amidst the changes in Japan, Parkes argued that, in addition to the samurai class, difficulties might also arise from the agricultural and merchantile class in Japan. As he put it to Lord Clarendon,

The Revolution of which the late war was only one of the earlier features, is still going on. It is not only a political but...also a great

<sup>109</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, February 9, 1868.

<sup>110</sup> FO 391/14, Yedo, Hammond Papers, December 5, 1868.

<sup>111</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, April 6, 1869.

<sup>112</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, May 28, 1869.

social revolution and it is difficult to estimate the extent of the changes that must be effected before the movement shall have run its course. Japan appears to be endeavouring to pass at a stride from feudalism to monarchical Government of a constitutional type. The movement is not confined to the direction of a few of the leading nobles. Not only are the lower grades of the armed class extensively concerned in it but even the agricultural and the industrial classes are claiming consideration for their position. It is not in the nature of things that so vast a change should be easily or immediately effected or that the transition should not be marked by much uncertainty.<sup>113</sup>

Parkes's reservation was supported by Iwakura's assertion, in a meeting in June, that every *daimyo* was 'a little Mikado in his own right' and that 'it is easier to talk of controlling such men than to do it.' More difficult to control than the *daimyo*, he added, were their retainers or armed followers 'who form to each Daimio a sort of guard which compels the Daimio to act according to their wishes.' In response to Parkes's statement that he thought the *daimyo* were readily surrendering their authority and revenues to the Mikado, and were bent in establishing a strong central power, Iwakura significantly replied that those were their professions, 'but when in the history of the world did you see such a measure carried in a day.' Consequently, Parkes concluded his dispatch to Hammond on an apprehensive note, by pointing out the similarity between what was happening in Japan and the abolition of feudalism in medieval Europe:

I trust affairs may still go on without an explosion but in a country so utterly disconnected as Japan is, it is impossible to say from day to day what may occur...I confess that one feels at times rather weary of contending with such unmanageable difficulties. I suppose however that the middle ages in Europe were equally disturbed, & we were engaged in endeavouring to fit into similar state of things.<sup>114</sup>

Following the surrender of the *han*, several decrees were issued by the government to further diminish the power of the *han*. Nevertheless, while diplomats reported on the government's effort to abolish the *han*'s right to issue their own coinage,<sup>115</sup> they scarcely mentioned other limits imposed by the government on the power of *han* officials.

The lack of opposition by *daimyo* in mid-1869 encouraged Parkes to write to Hammond on August 28 that the measure was a great step 'which has been achieved noiselessly & without violence'.<sup>116</sup> In October he similarly reported to Clarendon that although 'very much remains to be done before so extensive a scheme for the

<sup>113</sup> FO 46/109, No. 116, Conf., Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 28, 1869.

<sup>114</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, June 7, 1869.

<sup>115</sup> FO 46/110, No. 138, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, June 26, 1869.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, August 28, 1869.

reorganization of the offices, functions, and revenues of government can be brought into effective operation,' 'I have not heard that this great fundamental change in the Constitution has yet encountered opposition in the country Districts.'<sup>117</sup> Apart from the *daimyo*'s apparent acquiescence, several other factors may have also contributed to Parkes's optimism, one being a decree issued in August by which the government reserved to itself the approval of all appointments or offices in the *han*. To Parkes, as he reported on August 23, this was 'another obvious step towards the subordination of all the local administration to that of the central government.'<sup>118</sup> This assessment may have been influenced by his knowledge that, not only had the government successfully suppressed the Tokugawa insurgents at Hakodate and concentrated the administration at the capital of Tokyo, but it had also established effective control over the troublesome samurai bodyguard of the Emperor.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, the closing speech by the Mikado that followed the debates on the question of the surrender of the *han* in the general assembly should also be taken into account. While Parkes did note the existence of differences of opinion among the assembly members as to the extent and pace of the reform, he emphasized that the Emperor spoke of the unanimity that prevailed as to the necessity of the work of administration being conducted by a centralised government.<sup>120</sup> In view of the Emperor's standing, Parkes may have deduced from this that the measure would readily be accepted without serious opposition by the people of Japan.

### **The Problem of Opposition and the Abolition of the *Han***

Another major modernising reform was the abolition of feudal domains (*haihan chiken*) on August 29, 1871, and their replacement by a prefectural system. Yet before this took place, there were several incidents that threatened the stability of the Meiji government, and which drew comments by British diplomats.

One such incident was the uprising in Choshu in the winter of 1869-1870, which diplomats described as 'serious'<sup>121</sup> and 'formidable.'<sup>122</sup> Parkes attributed the uprising to the discontent felt by Choshu soldiers known as the *Kiheitai* with the insufficient government provisions for their sustenance following the disbandment of

<sup>117</sup> FO 46/113, No. 184, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, October 1, 1869.

<sup>118</sup> FO 46/111, No. 163, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, August 23, 1869.

<sup>119</sup> FO 46/112, No. 171, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, September 18, 1869.

<sup>120</sup> FO 46/113, No. 184, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, October 1, 1869. For details on the divided opinion in the *Kōgisho* in June and July 1869, see Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, pp. 332-333; Beckmann, G. M., *The Making of the Meiji Constitution: The Oligarchs and the Constitutional Development of Japan, 1868-1891* (Lawrence, Kansas: Univ. of Kansas Publications), 1957, pp. 14-15.

<sup>121</sup> FO 46/124, No. 46, Parkes to Clarendon, Yokohama, March 22, 1870.

<sup>122</sup> FO 46/142, No. 109, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, November 13, 1871.

the *han* armed bodies.<sup>123</sup> Parkes added that as in other commotions in the country, the rebels in Choshu belonged to the anti-foreign party and thus also professed to have for their object the 'expulsion of the barbarians'.<sup>124</sup>

To Parkes, there were several reasons why the outbreak should be considered as a serious threat to the government. One was that Choshu was one of the 'most loyal' supporters of the restoration and of the new government.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, the insurgents were not only reported to have taken over several important places in Choshu, but to have sent emissaries to prevail upon the disaffected men of other domains, particularly in the south, to join their cause. Nor was this all. The Choshu rebels were also reported 'to be inciting the peasantry to join their movement' and could easily draw support from that class in view of the bad harvest.<sup>126</sup>

The insurrection in Choshu indicated, in Parkes's view, not only the existence of discontented elements, but, more importantly, the government's lack of power. For instance, in a dispatch of March 1870, Parkes commented that 'Until the central Government shall be provided with a strong executive of their own they will of course find it difficult to deal with provincial disturbances or any other attack on their authority,' adding that the government also needed 'a standing army' of its own for this purpose. Nevertheless, he did not deny the difficulties that faced the Japanese government, as he observed that 'To weld into one uniform power the numerous ill governed little States of which Japan has hitherto been composed is clearly a work of time even if the Mikado's Government were possessed of extensive material resources.'<sup>127</sup> In another dispatch, Parkes observed that the Choshu uprising also showed the uncertainty of events in Japan. As he put it, 'In this inflammable and excitable country there is no saying when & where a trouble may break out or what it may lead to,' adding that 'They have no doubt a great deal of hard work to accomplish before Government in this country can become consolidated.'<sup>128</sup> It was this uncertainty, Parkes asserted to Clarendon in March 1870, that made it undesirable to remove British military forces from Yokohama, which was 'the seat of our [British] interests in Japan.'<sup>129</sup> Even though the troubles in Choshu had by March been suppressed, Parkes maintained that 'the Government must act with more energy than they have shown during the last few months if they are to maintain their authority effectively.'<sup>130</sup>

<sup>123</sup> FO 46/124, No. 46, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, March 22, 1870.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 42, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, March 12, 1870.

<sup>125</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, March 22, 1870.

<sup>126</sup> FO 46/124, No. 46, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, March 22, 1870.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 42, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, March 12, 1870.

<sup>128</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, March 22, 1870.

<sup>129</sup> FO 46/124, No. 46, Parkes to Clarendon, Yokohama, March 22, 1870.

<sup>130</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, March 26, 1870.

The difficulty faced by the government was not seen as emanating from Choshu alone. In August 1870, Parkes noted a division in Japanese government, when some liberal members of the government were reported to have quit their posts. His response to the event showed some disappointment, as he observed to Hammond that 'Their absence from the Govt. would be a great loss as they are among the ablest of its members and are moreover friends of the English.' As to their identity, however, Parkes provided no details, nor did he elaborate on the causes for the dissension though he vaguely observed that the dissidents were 'very discontented and full of apprehensions as to the retrogression' of the government.<sup>131</sup> The friction which this episode revealed have been seen by historians as an important factor in the slowing in the pace of centralisation in 1870.<sup>132</sup> At the time Parkes was uncertain of its significance, but he remained hopeful: 'I trust this explosion, like others, may be get over without serious injury either to the administration of its policy.'<sup>133</sup>

It was not long, however, before the Meiji government again faced a potential serious threat when Satsuma showed signs of discontent in 1870-71. Even though there was no rebellion, this attracted more attention from diplomats than the uprising in Choshu because it reflected a more widespread opposition within the domain to the new regime and because Satsuma was a potentially stronger threat. Parkes first noted the unsettled condition of Satsuma in early 1870 following a memorandum prepared by a Legation official, J.C. Hall, on the state of affairs of the *han*. In his memorandum, Hall noted the military activity in the *han*, which included the establishment of a powder mill and an arsenal making numbers of rifled cannon, brass-field pieces, and numbers of shot and shell, as Satsuma's calculated preparation for any possible collision with the central government.<sup>134</sup> By early 1871, the situation in Satsuma was seen as such a cause for alarm to the central government that Parkes sent Francis Adams to Kagoshima in early that year to ascertain the condition in the *han*. Adams's report of February 1871 confirmed that there was 'much discontent in the clan with respect to the central Government.' Though various reasons for the discontent were offered to him by an influential Satsuma official, Adams's own conclusion was that the *han* was mainly dissatisfied with its share of political power

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, Yedo, August 8, 1870; *Ibid.*, Yokohama, August 22, 1870. The dissension followed an attempt by Okubo and Iwakura to limit the influence of the progressive members of the Finance Ministry, namely Okuma, Ito and their reforming colleagues, who advocated a pressing reform of finance and commutation of stipends. See Beasley, 'Meiji Political Institutions', p. 633; Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, pp. 342-343, 353.

<sup>132</sup> E.g., Sims, R. L., *A Political History of Modern Japan 1868-1952* (New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House), 1991, p. 27.

<sup>133</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, August 8, 1870.

<sup>134</sup> See memorandum by J. C. Hall of March 26, 1870 in FO 46/125, No. 59, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, April 12, 1870.

in the government.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, Adams also observed the *han's* tendency to maintain its feudal semi-independent status. Despite the surrender by the *han* of its possessions and men to the Mikado, there was no radical change in the local government, and though the '*han* prince' was styled *Chiji*, Adams maintained that it seemed to be little more than a change in the name since he and his relatives lived in the same seclusion as before. In fact, from his conversation with William Willis, another Legation official at Kagoshima, Adams noted that many *Chiji* in places other than Kyoto and Tokyo also kept themselves aloof from their people. All these prompted a skeptical comment by Adams about the consolidation of authority in Japan: 'It is evident that the great work of welding all the old principalities into one whole proceeds but slowly, and the old Feudal nobles retain their old position in their respective clans, meeting with the same signs of obeisance, and the same outward tokens of respect as of yore.'<sup>136</sup>

Parkes too maintained that the real reason for Satsuma's discontent was probably because they felt that 'they do not hold that position and influence in the Government, which they conceive to be their due.' While Adams's conclusion hinted at the general difficulty of consolidating the country, though, Parkes's report of March ended with a more specific caution that unless Satsuma was conciliated by the central government, the latter would find itself in grave difficulty, because, there were already disturbances in other parts of the country.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the government was also constrained by its lack of resources: 'Being as yet comparatively unsupported by any material force of its own it has to trust chiefly to diplomatic action in guarding against political combinations on the part of the clans.'<sup>138</sup> Given these circumstances, Parkes expressed hope that the government's attempt to effect calm in Satsuma through the dispatch of Iwakura to Kagoshima, would achieve success.<sup>139</sup>

By the end of March, Parkes was able to report, from a conversation with Date Munenari on March 23, that the Iwakura mission had been fruitful in persuading Satsuma to agree to join with Choshu and Tosa in supporting the Mikado's authority with all their available force and to furnish a garrison for the protection of the capital. Furthermore, the leading men of those three clans would also return to Tokyo to take up posts in the central government.<sup>140</sup> Parkes further observed, from a memorandum by Hall of March 23, that apart from Iwakura's personal persuasion, the change in Satsuma's attitude was also due to the arguments by Itagaki Taisuke from Kochi and

<sup>135</sup> Adams's memorandum, Yedo, February 8, 1871 in FO 46/137, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 11, 1871.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> FO 46/138, No. 31, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, March 11, 1871.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 38, Conf., Parkes to Clarendon, March 25, 1871.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 31, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, March 11, 1871.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 38, Conf., Parkes to Clarendon, March 25, 1871.

Sugi from Yamaguchi: they had led Saigo to agree to send back the *han* regiment which had been suddenly withdrawn from Tokyo some months before.<sup>141</sup> Adams, who later took over the charge of the legation from Parkes, also found the proceedings and results of the Iwakura mission to Kagoshima significant, and noted, in particular, that an Imperial letter had been addressed to Shimazu Hisamitsu calling upon him to come to the aid of his Sovereign and country.<sup>142</sup> From a meeting with Iwakura on June 4, Adams was able to report that the troops supplied from Satsuma, Choshu and Tosa would make a nucleus for the future Imperial army, and that other *han* would also assist in supporting the Mikado.<sup>143</sup>

Though the problems in Choshu and Satsuma were successfully confronted by the government, the occurrence of such incidents led diplomats to appreciate the difficulties that the work of consolidation in Japan would encounter. In a private audience with the Mikado on May 18 before he left for England, Parkes maintained that he admired the efforts made by the leading men of Japan 'to unite the country into one firm and compact state, governed by uniform and just laws.' But he added that 'Much, doubtless, remains to be done before this great work is accompanied.'<sup>144</sup> For his part, Adams was so concerned about stirring up opposition that he urged the Meiji government not to adopt hasty reforms. In a meeting with Sanjo in June 1871, since Japan, he said, 'was divided into two great parties, - the one party composed of those who wished to adopt every modern art and invention at once, and to advance headlong in civilization; - the other who desired to sit down on the mats and do absolutely nothing,' the true path for Japan was 'to steer between these two extremes. She [Japan] should carry out what she had begun, - but whatever she did, she should do thoroughly, and not attempt too much at once. There would then be little fear of any real opposition to the path of steady progress.'<sup>145</sup> In making this suggestion, it is worthy of note that his view was similar to, and may well have been based on, Iwakura's view. In an earlier meeting with Adams, Iwakura admitted that there were two parties in Japan, 'one which wished to adopt foreign inventions at once, and advance the country as it were at telegraphic speed, the other which was conservative and was opposed to making a number of changes suddenly and without much reflection, - which in fact wished to proceed at a slower rate, and to preserve the ancient institutions of the country.' For his part, Iwakura observed that 'the true policy probably lay between these two extremes' especially in view of the existence of some

<sup>141</sup> Hall's memorandum of March 23, 1871 in FO 46/138, No. 38, Conf., Parkes to Clarendon, March 25, 1871.

<sup>142</sup> FO 46/139, No. 8, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 12, 1871.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 7, Most Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 12, 1871.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 72, Parkes to Granville, Yokohama, May 22, 1871.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 16, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 17, 1871.

disaffected people, mostly belonging to Aizu, Shizuoka, and other clans, who opposed the late revolution and who hovered between the two great parties, and were always ready to foster any intrigue, with a view to embarrass and even to overthrow the government.<sup>146</sup>

Two months later, a further great change towards the unification of Japan was undertaken by the Meiji government with the abolition of the *han* on August 29, 1871 and the establishment of a system of prefectures with *Chiji* being replaced by officials from the central government. In line with his advice for a slow and steady reform, Adams expressed a more cautious view than other British diplomats. While Satow described it as a great change that would be followed by other reforms,<sup>147</sup> Adams commented that the measure was the 'most radical change,'<sup>148</sup> which might lead to problems for the government. This followed a conversation in September with Iwakura, who asserted that

...the most difficult question which the Government had had to deal with since the restoration to the Mikado of the Governing power was that of the Daimios...Now in order that the Emperor's power should be consolidated, and that His Government should be strong, it was absolutely necessary that the power of these Daimios should be broken, and the work of centralization accomplished. The Daimios must in fact be abolished ...There would thus be a gradual concentration of the Government, and the power of each Department would extent throughout the Empire.<sup>149</sup>

While Iwakura expressed the government's confidence in carrying out the reform, which also included the appointment of men of talent to government offices and the redemption of local paper money issued by former *han*, Adams acknowledged that the 'scheme was doubtless a most comprehensive one,' but also expressed concern that 'the Government might not be able to carry it out without bloodshed.' As he saw it, there were two possible sources of danger, firstly the dissatisfaction felt by the heavily taxed peasants, which might be taken advantage of by low-class samurai who had lost both income and position by the reforms, and secondly popular opposition to the suppression of Buddhism. Despite Iwakura's further assurance that the government could avert the danger since the scheme 'had been gradually prepared and matured' and that 'the government was quite strong enough to grapple successfully and without the occurrence of any grave disturbance,' Adams continued to harbour doubts, arguing that 'although Japan and Europe differed essentially, in forms of thought and the mode

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 7, Most Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 12, 1871.

<sup>147</sup> PRO 30/33/15/4, Satow's Diary, August 31, 1871.

<sup>148</sup> FO 46/141, No. 62, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, September 4, 1871. On the origin of the abolition of the *han*, and views and discussions among Meiji leaders on the reform, see e.g., Umegaki, *op. cit.*

<sup>149</sup> FO 46/141, No. 63, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, September 8, 1871.



of action, still there were certain universal laws to which all human beings were subject, and which made themselves felt in every country on the globe.<sup>150</sup> In a later meeting with the Japanese statesman, Adams expressed surprise when informed that none of the great *ex-daimyo*, particularly of Satsuma, Choshu and Tosa, would be appointed as *Chihanji* or governor of their former *han*; and in response Iwakura sought to reassure him that not only had the policy been carefully considered by the government, but there was also 'such an inherent loyalty and devotion to the Throne' amongst the Japanese that 'the moment an Imperial Decree was published, the nation accepted it as a matter of course.'<sup>151</sup> While he made no comment on Japanese loyalty to the Mikado, Adams did recognize that the reform had been adopted partly as a result of the memorials sent in to the government from *Chiji* of greater and lesser *han*, insisting on the consolidation of the country.<sup>152</sup>

Satow too was told by Kido Takayoshi that no opposition was to be expected from either the former *daimyo* or samurai class since the former had voluntarily conceded to the 1869 principle of surrendering their *han*, while the latter's rights were fully taken into consideration by the government. Kido's general language, Satow concluded, like 'that of all reformers of his class, is that of unlimited confidence in the future.'<sup>153</sup> A somewhat different impression, however, was given in October by Iwakura, when the latter significantly admitted to Satow that 'the change of Han into Ken had not at first seemed possible for 500 years at least, but events had worked in such a way that the Govt. thought they had better take advantage of the tide at the flood. They had expected bloodshed, of course, but had been agreeably disappointed.' Iwakura further added that there had, in fact, been a little disturbance in Geishu and also some dissatisfaction in Satsuma.<sup>154</sup> Iwakura's revelation is worthy of note because it not only indicates that at least one major leader had had some doubts about the success of the reform, but also illustrates Iwakura's frankness, towards Satow if not towards Adams.

That such a revelation was made by Iwakura also means that Adams's apprehension of possible troubles was not groundless. In fact, minor opposition in

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> FO 46/141, No. 73, Adams to Granville, Yedo, September 15, 1871. On loyalty to the Emperor, Norman maintains that the *daimyo* lack of opposition was not so much due to their loyalty to the August Imperial decree, but more to their realisation that it would be futile to resist the measure and also to the satisfactory economic settlements granted to them by the government. Norman, E. H., *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State: Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations), 1940, pp. 93-94.

<sup>152</sup> Some of the memorials requested for their *han* to be turned into ken, others requested that they might be permitted to lay down their swords, and to return to the agricultural condition. FO 46/141, No. 77, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, September 18, 1871.

<sup>153</sup> Satow's memorandum, encl. in FO 46/141, No. 80, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, September 18, 1871.

<sup>154</sup> PRO 30/33/15/4, Satow's Diary, October 24, 1871.

Matsuyama and other places in the country was reported in addition to the disturbance in Geishu, about which Adams was informed by Prime Minister Sanjo that some ill-disposed samurai had stirred up the lower classes with a view of preventing the father of the ex-*Chiji* from moving to Tokyo. While Adams did feel that in general the former *daimyo* were 'reconciled to their change of position, by the greater amount of liberty in their movements which they have thus acquired,' since they were not being confined to their residences in the capital, he still concluded pessimistically that 'a long time must elapse before the entire consolidation of the country is accomplished and in many of the old Hans for the present, the local Government must be carried on much as it was before the conversion of Han into Ken.'<sup>155</sup>

For his part, Parkes, who learned of the *haihan chicken* while on leave, observed that the reform, although implemented with unexpected speed, was not unanticipated, and that it marked the culmination of a gradual concentration of power by the government in Tokyo. He welcomed the measure as important for Japan, 'not only to ensure order among her own people, but also to enable her to take her position as Sovereign State among those Foreign Powers with whom she had concluded Treaties and contracted obligation.' Furthermore, he observed that the government could not depend on the administration of the *han* by their former *daimyo*. As he explained in November 1871,

The surrender of the Daimios in 1869 of their territories to the Mikado, and their appointment as Chijis or Governors of the same territories furnished a striking recognition on their part of the principle of Central Government, and also a distinct engagement to support it. But experience was needed to prove how far this surrender was real, and to what extent the new lieutenants were willing to abate their former independence as chiefs and to subordinate their action to that of the Central Government at Yedo. It was also doubted whether the Chiefs who were often little better than automotons - even in their own clans - would become more efficient administrators when acting in the name of the Mikado. Several of them voluntarily relinquished their new honors shortly after they were conferred, either because they found labour irksome or accountability unpleasant. ...We may conclude therefore that, in practice, the Government of Chiji has proved either too nominal to be useful, or inefficient. ...I look upon this step of openly relieving the Chiji of their executive function as another great advance in the work of consolidation.<sup>156</sup>

More optimistic than Adams, Parkes believed that the government had carefully planned the measure to avoid opposition: the former *daimyo* would be provided with a personal income, while those with the requisite knowledge and ability could hope for

<sup>155</sup> FO 46/143, No. 122, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, December 2, 1871.

<sup>156</sup> FO 46/142, Parkes to Clarendon, Ryde, November 3, 1871.

a career of honour as members of a consultative body. Moreover, Parkes added that the presence of the ex-*Chiji* at the capital would also prevent disaffected retainers in the provinces from using them as instruments in their grievances against the authorities.<sup>157</sup>

To carry forward the process of the *haihan chiken*, the central government underwent further reorganization in 1871 with the *Dajōkan* being divided into three boards: the Central Board (*Sei-in*), an executive body presided over by the *Dajō Daijin*, the Right Board (*U-in*), which comprised the heads of the administrative departments, and the Left Board (*Sa-in*), a legislative branch that replaced the *Shugi-in*.<sup>158</sup> On these changes, Satow, in a memorandum to Adams, recorded some noteworthy comments by Kido, who argued that while the *Shugi-in* established in 1868 was intended as 'an imitation of the representative institutions common in Europe,' it later proved to be a mistake since the assembly showed a tendency to oppose progressive government policy, and this, to Kido, showed that 'it is by no means certain that the opinion of the majority is the right one.' He added that the conversion of the *han* into *ken* entailed the reorganization of the government in order 'to avoid some of the errors they formerly fell into from over eagerness to accomplish in a short time what other nations had attained only after centuries of political life.' These changes, and the remarks by Kido, brought approbation from Adams. As he wrote to Clarendon, 'I must confess my satisfaction at the palpable evidence contained in the Memorandum of there being men in responsible positions in Japan who have become convinced that it is not by a mock imitation of European institutions, which are the growth of centuries, that the future consolidation of this empire is to be secured.'<sup>159</sup> Adams's comment was perhaps the first expression of an attitude which was to characterize most later British diplomats when they confronted the prospect of the introduction in Japan of a Western-style political system. For his part, however, Satow was less explicit in his commendation when he described Kido as a moderate reformer who 'is only applying European institutions where they accord with the Japanese spirit and the point of progress attained.'<sup>160</sup>

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> For details see Beckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-22.

<sup>159</sup> FO 46/142, No. 92, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, October 7, 1871. See the encl. Satow's memorandum.

<sup>160</sup> PRO 30/33/15/4, Satow's Diary, October 6, 1871. Beasley and McLaren maintain that the reform was to concentrate more power into the hands of prominent samurai leaders in the government in facilitating the carrying out government policy. Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, p. 346; McLaren, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-124.

## The Continuation of Anti-Foreign Sentiment

As far as the attitude of the Imperial government towards foreigners was concerned, British diplomats seemed to be reasonably satisfied. Satow, for instance, was pleased to report that a notification was issued in February 1868 to the effect that proper behaviour was to be shown towards foreigners as the Mikado attached great importance to the cultivation of friendly relations and the fulfilment of treaties with Western Powers.<sup>161</sup> Diplomats further noted that in several cases of assaults on foreigners not only was capital punishment inflicted on the offenders to avoid similar incidents in the future, but Imperial decrees were also published by the government condemning the attacks.<sup>162</sup> There were also personal assurances by Meiji leaders, including Iwakura, of the new friendly policy of the government,<sup>163</sup> and the receptive and friendly disposition shown by the Meiji leaders towards foreign representatives, which had hitherto rarely been seen among officials of the Bakufu, may also have impressed and gratified British diplomats.<sup>164</sup> Other probable factors may also have been the government's apparent policy of gradual toleration towards Christians and Christianity in Japan,<sup>165</sup> and the satisfactory reception given to the Duke of Edinburgh in the summer of 1869, even though his visit was opposed by some conservatives.<sup>166</sup> Given these proofs of its desire for good relations, it is not surprising that Parkes felt able to report in early 1871 that

There can be no question that many Japanese, and particularly those who have not yet come in contact with us, retain their old feelings against foreigners, but I see no reason yet to doubt that the Mikado's Government - although once the head and font of the hostility which we encountered in entering on our intercourse with Japan - are now among the converts to a liberal and friendly policy...the establishment of relations with the Mikado's Court has won over to one side many members of a most influential class, whose assistance is indispensable to us in the removal of old prejudices and the extinction of fanatical enmity.<sup>167</sup>

Nevertheless, British diplomats, particularly in 1868-1869, occasionally voiced the suspicion that some individuals within the government continued to

<sup>161</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, February 9, 1868.

<sup>162</sup> FO 46/92, No. 49, Parkes to Stanley, Hyogo, March 11, 1868; *ibid.*, No. 61, March 18, 1868.

<sup>163</sup> Iwakura's statement to Parkes in *ibid.*, No. 64, Kyoto, March 25, 1868; Iwakura's statement to Adams in FO 46/139, No. 7, Most Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 12, 1871.

<sup>164</sup> For instance, Parkes described his interview with Iwakura on January 9, 1869, as a 'spontaneous mark of good feeling' and 'a marked improvement upon the old relations, and gives promise of much greater intimacy in our intercourse than that which has hitherto existed.' FO 46/106, No. 5, Conf., Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, January 13, 1869.

<sup>165</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, March 2, 1869.

<sup>166</sup> E.g., FO 46/110, No. 154, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, July 26, 1869; FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, July 28, 1869.

<sup>167</sup> FO 46/137, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, February 11, 1871.

entertain a hostile feeling against foreigners. Satow, who befriended many Japanese leaders, noted in December 1868 that the old distrust of foreigners existed in Japan when he recorded the opinion of his Japanese friend, Nakai Shirokane, as to the true feeling of the new government. As Nakai put it,

The foreign Ministers are a necessary evil, to be endured but not taken to the heart. Nothing pleases the Mikado's government so much as to see the foreign RR [Representatives] living at Yokohama, and the idea of taking their advice upon any point is never entertained for a moment. In fact, the RR are looked upon in much the same light as the rusui [representatives] of the daimios; i.e., persons sent to Japan by their respective governments to receive the Mikado's orders, whenever occasion may arise.

In response, Satow significantly observed that part of the blame for the hostile feeling resided with the foreign ministers themselves: 'Fine houses, comfortable living & whole skins at Yokohama are preferable to makeshifts and dangers in Yedo; but for all they know or can learn of diplomatic affairs they might just as well be at Hong Kong.'<sup>168</sup> The same suspicion was also voiced by Parkes. For instance, regarding the Mikado's advisers, he wrote in May 1869 that he 'had reason to believe that owing either to timidity or design a reactionary feeling was spreading in their ranks' that some of these advisers were believed to have urged the Mikado, on coming to Tokyo in 1869, to show some regard for the feelings of the anti-foreign section, which had so greatly contributed to bring the new government into power.<sup>169</sup> Such suspicions may have also derived from the fact that some anti-foreign agitators belonged to the group of Court nobles<sup>170</sup> and samurai who composed the Emperor's Bodyguard (*Shimpei*).<sup>171</sup> These were noted for their call for 'severe measures against Foreigners' and for advocating strongly the persecution of native Christians, and it was believed that in carrying out their anti-foreign scheme they used the 'system of violence and assassination,' as they were 'endeavouring to promote a collision with Foreign Powers by murdering Foreigners.'<sup>172</sup> In fact, various attacks on foreigners in Japan did occur during 1868-71 and even Parkes had to encounter a few himself. Yet, the anti-foreign movement did not affect foreigners alone. Diplomats observed that it also threatened the lives of many liberal members of the government as the xenophobes believed that

<sup>168</sup> PRO 30/33/15/3, Satow's Diary, December 13, 1868.

<sup>169</sup> FO 46/109, No. 114, Conf., Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 28, 1869.

<sup>170</sup> FO 46/108, No. 95, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, April 29, 1869; FO 46/109, No. 108, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 13, 1869. Not all Japanese Court nobles were, however, regarded as anti-foreign, and there were certainly some Court nobles of liberal views in the Meiji government such as Iwakura Tomomi and Sanjo Sanetomi.

<sup>171</sup> FO 46/109, No. 108, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 13, 1869.

<sup>172</sup> Alexander Von Siebold's memorandum, May 10, 1869, in FO 46/109, No. 114, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 28, 1869.

'the Japanese who advocates friendship with the foreigner is a traitor to his country and an enemy to the national faith of which they consider themselves to be the special defenders.'<sup>173</sup>

As to the government's power and efficiency, Parkes observed several factors that contributed to its difficulty in controlling the anti-foreign movement, especially in 1868-70. One, he maintained, was the lack of common purpose within the government. As he wrote to Hammond in May 1869 when the meeting of the general assembly at Tokyo offered hope that the surrender of the *han* would assist a united action by the government in matters of foreign affairs as well as internal policy:

I feel that I must do all I can to stimulate the Govt. to vigorous & healthy action, but the want of unity & cohesion is a great stumbling block to energetic or combined effort. They must however take some decision in respect both to their internal & foreign affairs. ...the presence of most of the Daimios & nearly every person of consequence at Yedo during the next two months will afford ample opportunity for general deliberation. A united scheme for the government of the country is the one thing needful & these offers of the Daimios to surrender their rights of Government, if made in earnest afford ground for hope that such a scheme may yet be accomplished.<sup>174</sup>

In another dispatch, he specifically noted that the concentration of the whole administration in Tokyo might also improve government restraints on the anti-foreign movement.<sup>175</sup>

There was also, as he saw it, a problem of departmental cohesion within the government which hindered united and effective action. As early as April 1868, the inconsistency of the government's sentences upon the men who attacked him in March led Parkes to observe that the 'wavering action of the Government' was 'attributable to differences between various departments of the administration on questions relating to its foreign policy.'<sup>176</sup> In subsequent dispatches, Parkes explained that the problem partly rose from the difficulties experienced by the Japanese Foreign Minister with some illiberal members of the government. This was admitted to Algernon Mitford, an official of the Legation, by the *daimyo* of Uwajima, who maintained that the 'illiberal party' had succeeded in preventing the separate publication of a law or decree making known the sentences of offences against foreigners and deferred it for insertion in a new code which the Judicial Department

<sup>173</sup> FO 46/109, No. 108, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 13, 1869. Japanese leaders who fell victim included Omura Masujiro and Yokoi Shonan in 1869, and Hirofusa Sanetomi in 1871.

<sup>174</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, May 14, 1869.

<sup>175</sup> FO 46/109, No. 108, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 13, 1869.

<sup>176</sup> In the sentence passed upon his attackers, three out of four men had been sentenced to perpetual exile instead of to death, which was the original sentence passed by the Japanese government. FO 46/93, No. 79, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, April 18, 1868.



was engaged in compiling.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, in carrying out necessary measures against the offenders, the Japanese Foreign Ministry was also seen as lacking sufficient power and influence. For instance, in the case of insults offered to foreigners on the Tokaido by the retainers of *daimyo* in 1869, Parkes reported to Lord Clarendon that despite the assurance given to him by Vice-Foreign Minister Higashi Kuze in May that the matter would be investigated and notifications issued, 'his conversation did not inspire me with much confidence in the capacity of his Department for this purpose.'<sup>178</sup> In a later dispatch, he reiterated that 'The Government sadly wants compactness and cohesion - the Departments do not appear to work in unison with each other, nor does the Foreign Office seem to possess that influence to which it is entitled.'<sup>179</sup> To further illustrate the problem, Parkes reported the visit to the Legation on May 14 by Tokudaiji Dainagon and the Prince of Awa, both Ministers of State but unconnected with the Foreign Department, to discuss the Tokaido case. Despite the Japanese visitors' claim that they had been sent by the Mikado to express the government's commitment to find the offenders, Parkes suspected that behind it lay the question of the Foreign Minister's credibility among his own colleagues. As he wrote to Clarendon,

I had no information as to the object of this unusual visit, which appeared to have been paid without reference to the Foreign Department. It might be that other members of the govt. wished to judge for themselves of the accuracy of the representations made to them by the Foreign Minister, or to see whether I should be influenced by their arguments or by the use of the Mikado's name.<sup>180</sup>

Similarly, following the later outbreak of anti-foreign trouble at Nagasaki, Parkes observed that although he had no reason to question the good disposition of the Foreign Minister, he was doubtful whether the minister's advice 'was being given at this juncture of affairs with all the boldness that was desirable; or if so given, whether it received from the other members of the Government all the attention which it merited.'<sup>181</sup> This was because, as he reported to Hammond in May 1869, following a formal interview with Iwakura and several other leading men of the government in which he urged the necessity of the Mikado loyally acting up the assurances he had

<sup>177</sup> The illiberal party's endeavour was, however, overruled by the government, that the law was finally published in the manner agreed and satisfactory to foreigners. FO 46/93, No. 79, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, April 18, 1868.

<sup>178</sup> FO 46/109, No. 102, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 11, 1869.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 108, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 13, 1869.

<sup>180</sup> The visit took place after Parkes emphasized in an earlier meeting with the Japanese Foreign Minister that unless the Tokaido case was satisfactorily settled, he would not treat with the Mikado's government on any other subjects, except the matter of Shimonoseki indemnity. *Ibid.*, No. 112, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 27, 1869.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 114, Conf., Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 28, 1869.

given to Foreign Powers to control the 'armed class', the Foreign Minister thanked him for holding the interview and expressing the sentiments which, he said, 'would support him materially in his discussions with his colleagues.'<sup>182</sup>

Parkes also attributed the government's difficulty to the samurai custom of wearing swords.<sup>183</sup> The ending of this tradition, Parkes maintained, was thus necessary, as it would not only reduce the threat to foreigners, but also make the work of administering the country much easier.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, the measure would also help Japan to project a good image to the outside world, particularly to the Western nations with whom treaties had been signed. The present situation where the Foreign Powers had to protect their own people with ground and navy forces against the anti-foreign threat, he added, 'reflected little credit on Japan and should not exist with a government well ordered and well disposed.'<sup>185</sup>

Nevertheless, Parkes admitted that the prohibition of wearing swords by samurai could not be undertaken without difficulty and would take time, especially as there was no effective police system in Japan. Reflecting on the assassination of two Japanese officials, Omura Masujiro and Ono Seigoro, in 1869, Parkes concluded to Clarendon:

The remedy for this state of things is I fear a work of time. In a country so imperfectly organized as Japan where the law has never been invested with much power and which possesses no institution worthy of the name of police - in our sense of the term - it is not easy to see how the designs of the assassin are to be guarded against. Strenuous exertion on the part of the Government, by discountenancing such designs, may in the end check them, but at present members of the government are among those who are attacked.<sup>186</sup>

Having recognized the difficulty of the government, in response to the attack upon two British subjects, Dallas and Ring, in January 1870, Parkes and other foreign representatives recommended a gradual disarmament by the Meiji government, beginning with samurai of the lower rank.<sup>187</sup> The suggestion was again proposed in March by all foreign representatives in a joint note, and although their recommendation was not implemented, the Japanese government's promise to punish offenders by taking away their swords and to publish a set of regulations with the object of maintaining better order in the cities, was considered by Parkes as reasonably sufficient at that time in view of the need for a gradual approach in

<sup>182</sup> FO 391/15, Yedo, Hammond Papers, May 28, 1869.

<sup>183</sup> FO 46/112, No. 178, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, September 28, 1869.

<sup>184</sup> FO 46/113, No. 188, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, October 8, 1869.

<sup>185</sup> FO 46/109, No. 114, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, May 28, 1869.

<sup>186</sup> FO 46/114, No. 222, Parkes to Clarendon, Yokohama, November 19, 1869.

<sup>187</sup> FO 46/137, No. 5, Parkes to Clarendon, Yokohama, January 23, 1870.



introducing the suggested reform.<sup>188</sup> Although the anti-foreign movement did not end with the abolition of the *han*, diplomatic reports demonstrate that it was never again to be as strong and dangerous as it was during 1868-71.

### Conclusion

The accelerated modernisation of Japan after 1868 attracted the attention of British diplomats in the country, and many views were expressed on various reforms undertaken by the Meiji government. Some of the reforms prompted positive comments by British diplomats, especially those aimed towards the modernisation and consolidation of Japan such as the creation of different departments of state, the establishment of a general consultative assembly, the abandonment of the practice of seclusion by the Mikado, the movement of the capital to Tokyo, and the surrender and abolition of the *han*. While British diplomats, with the exception of Satow, did not involve themselves directly in bringing about the Meiji Ishin, nevertheless, in welcoming the reforms, diplomats may have had in mind not only their importance to the creation of a modern nation state, but also their possible relevance to British interests. Parkes's attempt to discuss the British constitution with the ex-Shogun in Osaka, like his encouragement for the establishment of the general representative assembly, may be seen to indicate his desire to see the adoption by Japan of the British political system. Regarding the movement of the capital, diplomats may have well nurtured the idea that the measure would enhance the influence of foreign representatives on the Meiji government though this was not mentioned. Similarly, the surrender and abolition of the *han* promised to increase the effectiveness of the new government in carrying out the stipulations of the treaties between Japan and Western Powers and in establishing more control over the armed samurai who were hostile towards foreigners.

It is also worthy of note that not all of the reforms carried out in Japan between 1868 and 1871 received equal emphasis and attention from British diplomats. With regard to the political and administrative reorganization of the new Japanese government, while diplomats, particularly Parkes, showed a great interest in the Assembly of *daimyo* and leading samurai, they overlooked the June 1868 constitution or *Seitaisho*, and no comment whatsoever was made on the promulgation of the Charter Oath in April 1868 and the pre-feudal elements of the early Meiji reorganization of the governmental structure. Moreover, while British diplomats did observe the gradual exposure of the Mikado to the outer world to enhance his

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<sup>188</sup> FO 46/138, No. 33, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, March 11, 1871.

sovereign position as the ruler of Japan, no mention was made of the elevation of the Mikado's position through the establishment of the *Jingikan* and the Great Teaching Promulgation campaign. Regarding the weakening of the feudal system, British diplomats provided interesting comments on the surrender and abolition of the *han* and the opposition faced by the government, but they overlooked (perhaps because they were not rigorously enforced) a few other relevant measures such as the banning on the *daimyo* from forming marriage alliances, the limits on the *han* forces, the removal of *daimyo* judicial rights, and the order to samurai who accepted office in the central administration to abandon connections with their original *han*. Moreover, while diplomatic dispatches did contain information on *daimyo* rivalry, they indicate a limited understanding of internal government disputes and differences. While British diplomats enjoyed exceptional access to prominent Japanese, such as Iwakura, Sanjo, Terajima and Kido, on Japanese internal affairs, it seems likely that these leaders held back some information, especially where internal disputes and differences were concerned and the complexity of Japanese politics, as well as limited resources, made it far from easy for diplomats to gather inside information, even if they had sought to do so.

As to what extent diplomats' perceptions during 1868-1871 simply continued the previous diplomatic views of the pre-1868 period, one element of continuity can be seen in the diplomats' emphasis on the existence of *daimyo* rivalry and disunity. This was one factor which led diplomats to cast doubts about the future working of the new government in the early months of the Restoration. Another persisting diplomatic theme was the danger posed to foreigners' lives in Japan by the anti-foreign movement, and the need for the Japanese government to enforce a stricter control, particularly over the samurai. However, a significant difference existed in that diplomats recognized an improvement in the readiness of the new government to ensure the safety of the foreigners. At the same time they were aware of a new factor in the involvement of the samurai class in local anti-government uprisings such as that in Choshu.

As regards the question of 'Orientalist' attitude among British diplomats towards the modernising changes that took place following the Meiji Ishin, it can be said that some comments may suggest this, notably Parkes's pessimistic view of the ability of *daimyo* as members of the Japanese general assembly and also as *Chiji* of their *han*, Adams's warnings of the danger that might result from the abolition of the *han*, Parkes's unfavourable comparison of Japan with China à propos the problem resulting from the samurai right to wear two swords, and his criticisms of the lack of coordination within the government in controlling the anti-foreign movement, and

also Satow's critical comments on the appearance of the Imperial and Tokugawa military forces. These are hardly clear-cut examples, however, and it is much easier to find comments that are free of 'Orientalism' such as Parkes's positive comments on the Japanese assembly and the 1868 administrative reforms, Adams's encouraging response to the government reorganization in 1871, and the favourable reports by Satow and Parkes on the surrender and abolition of the *han*. Given such a range of views by the diplomats, it would be difficult to label any diplomats as 'Orientalist' in the sense that Edward Said uses the term. Besides, some Meiji leaders, particularly Iwakura, themselves admitted to uncertainty about Japan's ability to implement safely the changes carried out by the government, and recognized the inferiority of Japan to the West in some important aspects - thus implying that diplomats' images of Japan were far from being total misconceptions.

## CHAPTER 2

### BRITISH DIPLOMATIC VIEWS OF THE DISMANTLING OF JAPANESE FEUDALISM, 1871-77

Although in 1871 the Meiji government had taken the crucial steps towards ending feudalism by abolishing the *han*, much more needed to be done before all the remnants of feudalism were eradicated in Japan. In the next six years it proceeded to complete that task by undertaking various reforms, the repercussions of which were far-reaching. While the dismantling of feudalism inevitably exacerbated differences over the pace and extent of the change and may have increased competition for political power among Japanese leaders, it equally provoked discontent among samurai and peasants as both classes were directly and adversely affected by the government reforms. Given their significant impacts on the consolidation and modernisation of Japan, it is not surprising that these developments in 1871-1877 attracted the attention of British diplomats.

#### The Iwakura Mission

The Japanese mission which embarked on a tour of Europe and the United States for eighteen months (from the autumn of 1871 to the summer 1873), although not itself a direct means of dismantling feudalism, gave evidence of the desire on the part of the Japanese government to acquire new ideas and experience in order to modernise the country. The fact that several members of the mission, notably Iwakura Tomomi, Kido Takayoshi, Okubo Toshimichi, Ito Hirobumi and Yamaguchi Naoyoshi, were also prominent members of the government, implied that they would be able to influence the country's policy on their return from the West after investigating the measures and innovations which might help Japan to become a modern country.

Francis Adams, who took over the charge of the legation from Parkes in November 1871, was alive to the motives of the mission. Following a conversation with Iwakura in mid-November, Adams reported to Foreign Secretary Lord Granville that the purpose of the embassy was to establish better relations with foreign countries, to learn about their institutions, and especially to gain a more precise knowledge of their laws, their commerce and their educational, as well as their naval and military, systems.<sup>1</sup> To Iwakura, Adams praised the mission as 'an admirable one' and advised that, as the new

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<sup>1</sup> FO 46/142, No. 116, Conf., Adams to Granville, Yedo, November 18, 1871; also see *Ibid.*, No. 120, December 2, 1871. On the Iwakura mission see Nish. I. (ed.), *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe: A New Assessment* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library), 1998; Cobbing, A., Ohta, A., Checkland, O., and Breen, J., *The Iwakura Mission in Britain, 1872*, (London: STICERD, London School of

power in Japan, the Mikado's government should send a well chosen embassy abroad. Unlike the previous envoys sent several times during the Shogunate, the ambassador should be able to speak with authority in the name of the Mikado on all matters connected with Japan and should, therefore, be selected from amongst the men who possessed the highest influence in the government, and who had been mainly instrumental in bringing about the Restoration. He thus approved when Iwakura later announced that apart from himself as the head, Kido and Okubo, two of the prominent Restoration leaders, had been appointed as Councillors of the embassy.<sup>2</sup>

Adams's comments did not, however, halt with the selection of the embassy members as he also advised on the object of the mission, particularly with regard to the reform of Japanese law. Just prior to the dispatch of the embassy, he emphasized to Iwakura the favourable opportunity which the members of the embassy would have for examining the various systems of law in the different countries which they would visit, and on the need to effect legal change and abandon the element of torture in Japanese law. His observation was agreed with by Iwakura who replied that it was one of their aims to study the laws of various countries 'with a view of forming a code for Japan, and of constituting regular tribunals for the administration of justice.'<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Consul Russell Robertson at Yokohama emphasized the potential benefit to the economic development of the country. As he wrote in March 1873:

...the minds of the Ambassadors are likely to be influenced by an inquiry into the different manufactures for which each country they visit may be celebrated; and how it is hoped the experience acquired by the Embassy may prove to its members that commerce constitutes the greatness of a nation, and that while the Legislature provides such laws as expediency directs for the governance of trade, it wisely abstains from a direct or active interference in the business transactions of merchants.<sup>4</sup>

A more general evaluation was made by Parkes, who, upon the return of the embassy from Europe in the autumn of 1873, observed that Japan would now have a better prospect since the Japanese statesmen who had been on the mission admitted the need for Japan to achieve progress. This followed his meeting on October 4 with Iwakura, whose remarks, according to Parkes, showed wisdom and whose return to Japan

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Economics), 1998.

<sup>2</sup> FO 46/142, No. 116, Conf., Adams to Granville, Yedo, November 18, 1871; PRO 30/33/15/4, Satow's Diary, November 15 and 26, 1871.

<sup>3</sup> FO 46/143, No. 130, Adams to Granville, Yedo, December 16, 1871.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, March 31, 1873, Commercial Reports, *Parliamentary Papers (PP)*,

'will have a beneficial influence on the action of the Government.' In response to Parkes's query whether he had noted the changes in Japan that had taken place during his absence, Iwakura said:

The changes I notice are not to my mind satisfactory. Much is said about progress but I find that our progress is more superficial than real and that our recent administration is wanting in earnestness and permanence. Our measures must be more carefully considered and must be better adapted to the actual condition of our people. It is a mistake to think that Japan is at present fitted to take rank with the nations of England and America. We have not yet acquired the requisite wealth nor the necessary degree of knowledge. And even in domestic matters the Government though apparently successful in Yedo, has caused great discontent in the provinces, and it is there that the efficacy of the Government is chiefly tested.<sup>5</sup>

Parkes expressed his concurrence with Iwakura's statements and in doing so, he may be argued to reveal an 'Orientalist' view of a backward Japan. Yet the fact that Iwakura himself admitted the inferiority of Japan to the West should be borne in mind in examining Parkes's view of Japan's progress. In fact, Iwakura again hinted at the inferiority of Japan when, while conversing with Parkes two years later and after expressing his hope that a Korean mission would be sent to Japan to witness the latter's progress, he reflected on his experience of touring Europe and the United States: 'A single sight of such things is worth more than a hundred accounts of them. I may say that I had listened with attention to all that was told me of foreign countries before I went abroad in 1872. I found that my impressions were very imperfect, and that I had to modify most of my previous conclusions.'<sup>6</sup>

In the light of the importance subsequently attributed to the Japanese mission by later historians, British diplomatic comments on its effects on the Meiji government's policy were conspicuously brief. While historians have emphasized its impact on the pace and extent of modernisation,<sup>7</sup> British diplomats' reports concern mainly with its immediate effect on what they regarded as the anti-foreign attitude of the Japanese government. Rather than noting evidence of greater-enlightenment, diplomats complained of what they saw as the unconciliatory and disobliging spirit of the government, which included the rejection by the government of the proposal for foreigners to travel in the interior and the continued confinement of foreign excursions to

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1873.

<sup>5</sup> FO 46/168, No. 81, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, October 6, 1873.

<sup>6</sup> FO 46/190, No. 24, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 8, 1875.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g., Irokawa, D., *The Culture of the Meiji Period* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press), 1985, p. 58; Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, pp. 369-371.

the limit of twenty-five miles around the treaty ports, the issuance of many vexatious rules, and the assumption by Custom House authorities of greater power over foreigners than the treaty sanctioned. There were also complaints that the Japanese Police exercised their authority in a harsh and arbitrary manner and in several cases grossly ill-treated foreigners, and that redress from injuries, whether of a criminal or a civil nature, became almost unobtainable by any proceedings in Japanese Courts. On the Japanese policy Parkes observed in a report of May 1874, that the only cause that could be assigned for this change in the tone and conduct of the Japanese authorities was

...the mistaken supposition that by making themselves unpleasant to foreigners, the Japanese Government may prevail upon the latter to submit more easily to Japanese views. The unfriendly attitude had appeared more marked since the return of the Japanese embassy from Europe, and I think there is little doubt that it may be mainly attributed to the disappointment felt by Iwakura, on finding that the Government of the Treaty Powers were not inclined to yield to the wishes of the Japanese Government on those important points, which the latter, acting upon unsound foreign advice had prematurely raised, namely jurisdiction over foreigners and the abrogation of the existing Tariff.<sup>8</sup>

### **Divisions and Problems Within the Government**

In the period which followed *haihan chiken* in 1871, British diplomats noted several cases of dissension among Japanese leaders, one being related to their disagreement over the speed and pace of reform. Several informed comments by Ernest Satow attested to the problem. For instance, in September 1871 Satow reported that though they agreed on the fundamentals, Saigo and Kido were said not to get on together, Kido 'wishing to proceed too fast.'<sup>9</sup> This was also acknowledged by Iwakura who, in a meeting in November with Satow and Adams, maintained that the progressive party was moving too fast. Significantly, Satow and Adams expressed their concurrence with Iwakura's comment.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, as to who were the progressive members and what sort of reforms Iwakura meant, Satow did not elaborate, though it is probable that Iwakura had in mind such progressive members of the Finance Ministry as Ito Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru, whose proposals included drastic commutation of samurai stipends and measures towards centralisation of the government.

<sup>8</sup> FO 46/179, No. 88, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 22, 1874.

<sup>9</sup> PRO 30/33/15/1, Satow's Diary, September 26, 1871.

<sup>10</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, November 26, 1871.

A clearer comment on the differences of the Meiji leaders may be found in Adams's report of January 1872. In contrast to Iwakura, of whom he wrote that 'His conservative turn of mind is a wholesome check upon the almost republican tendencies of some of the ultra-progressive members of the government,' Kido, he asserted, was one of 'the most zealous members of the party of progress' having composed the memorial surrendering the *han* registers to the Mikado, and been more or less intimately connected with the subsequent reforms. Of the same group as Kido, he referred to Ito as 'one of the most advanced reformers' and as very intelligent, though he disapprovingly observed that Ito had perhaps listened much too easily to 'Foreigners of not the best class - not an uncommon fault in this country', referring to a report that Ito had engaged a few American advisers to serve in the Meiji government.<sup>11</sup> The latter remark about Ito is not surprising in view of the fact that it was the desire of British diplomats in Japan to see an increase in British commercial and political influence through the engagement of British advisers and expertise by the Meiji government.

Another sign of friction noted by diplomats was the resignation in mid-1873 of Inoue Kaoru and Shibusawa Eiichi, who had been entrusted with the administration of the Finance Ministry during the absence with the Embassy in Europe of Okubo, the Minister of Finance. While later historians tend to examine it in relation to *han* rivalry within the government,<sup>12</sup> British diplomats, particularly Parkes, focused mainly on the financial discrepancies disclosed by Inoue and Shibusawa's 1873 report (in direct contradiction of the previous accounts which had been made public by the Commissioners of the Japanese government in London in autumn 1872, and later in Vienna in spring 1873) and on the impact of such inconsistencies on Japan's image in the modern commercial world. Parkes's different emphasis may perhaps be argued to show that Parkes himself was not aware of the nature of the contention that was taking place within the government. More probably, he was aware how financial discrepancies could damage Japan's image, and thus regarded this as a grave matter. As he wrote in his reports, 'I fear [the discrepancies] will prove very damaging to Japanese credit in England and elsewhere,'<sup>13</sup> as they 'occasion much surprise and general distrust as to Japanese financial administration in the

<sup>11</sup> Among the American advisers mentioned by Adams were the American Agricultural Mission of which General Capron was the head, and also Peshine Smith, who was to advise the government on points connected with the revision of the Treaties. FO 46/151, Adams to Granville, Yedo, January 12, 1872.

<sup>12</sup> Sims, for instance, concentrates on controversies related to the Finance Ministry including the problem of budget allocation to various government ministries and attempts by other members of the government to block the power of the Finance Ministry under Inoue by appointing new *Sangi*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 37-38; also see Umegaki, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-174

<sup>13</sup> FO 46/166, No. 20, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, May 23, 1873.



commercial world.<sup>14</sup> Despite the Japanese government's attempt to dismiss what they considered to be the miscalculations of Inoue and Shibusawa by publishing a counter-statement, Parkes continued to express the pessimistic view that it was not an easy task as he believed that 'the Government themselves are ignorant of the real state of their finances.'<sup>15</sup> His anticipation proved to be true as he later noted that while the counter-statement published in June by the government succeeded in dismissing the deficit of 10 million yen estimated by Inoue and Shibusawa, yet it continued to show some inconsistencies with the London and Vienna statements.<sup>16</sup>

Parkes did not fail completely to note the connection between the budgetary dispute and the difference of views within government circles over the pace and extent of reform in Japan, for he reported that Inoue and Shibusawa's memorial also criticised the government policy, charging it with 'hasty and ill-considered legislation, with permitting a general race for Office, with forcing on Japan before she is prepared for it, the civilization of foreign countries, and with burdening the country with many new taxes in order to meet the increased expenditure.'<sup>17</sup> Instead of dwelling upon the charges against the government as claimed by Inoue and Shibusawa, though, Parkes concluded his report by noting that the fact that the memorial was allowed to be made public was astonishing and by suggesting that the fate of Inoue and Shibusawa for doing so was uncertain. Surprisingly, he subsequently failed to note that Inoue soon returned to serve in the government without being tried for producing the controversial statement.<sup>18</sup>

In the same year, a serious dispute broke out over policy regarding Korea - *Seikan ron* (subduing Korea). As a result, five *Sangi* (Councillors of State) who favoured the idea of going to war with Korea resigned their office in the Supreme Council on October 25 when their plan was opposed by Iwakura, Okubo and others who had returned from the mission to Europe. The resigning *Sangi* were Soejima Taneomi, Itagaki Taisuke, Goto Shojiro, Eto Shimpei and Saigo Takamori. The outcome of the conflict was welcomed by Parkes, who, like the anti-war party, took the view that Japan should avoid unnecessary war and concentrate on internal reforms. A war, as he put it two days after the resignation of the war party, could not be carried out 'without incurring an expenditure which in the present condition of her finances, would severely cripple her

<sup>14</sup> FO 46/167, No. 25, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, June 6, 1873.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> FO 46/167, No. 29, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, June 23, 1873.

<sup>17</sup> FO 46/166, No. 20, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, May 23, 1873. See details in e.g., Beasley, *Meiji Restoration*, p. 372.

<sup>18</sup> Inoue later served in the Japanese government in various capacities, notably as foreign minister. Shibusawa, however, devoted himself thereafter to entrepreneurial activities.

resources and materially retard the progress of the country.<sup>19</sup>

In commenting of the motives of the war party, Parkes maintained that apart from their desire to increase the prestige of Japan, the proposed expedition was also connected in part with the anti-feudal reforms undertaken by the new government, particularly the partial commutation of stipends and the conscription law, that affected the samurai class. Following an interview with ex-*Sangi* Soejima on October 29, Parkes concluded that the true reason for the expedition to Korea was because Japan was suffering from financial pressure, that it found it difficult 'to meet the cost of the regular army which is now being formed, and also to provide for the disbanded Samurai, whom the Government will not trust as regular troops, and who are cast adrift upon the country in a discontented condition.' Moreover, Parkes also pointed to the personal ambitions of the resigning Councillors. He claimed that there were signs that Soejima aimed at a higher position in the government than that of Minister for Foreign Affairs, that he had lately formed a coalition with Saigo, the Commander in Chief, and if war with Korea was carried out, 'the conduct of the Government...would in all probability have devolved upon these two men, and Iwakura might have found himself displaced.'<sup>20</sup> In singling out only Soejima and Saigo, Parkes seems to have ignored or regarded as unimportant the roles of Goto and Itagaki (who were from Tosa) and Eto (from Hizen), who favoured the expedition to Korea partly out of a desire to weaken the solidarity of Satsuma and Choshu in the government.<sup>21</sup>

As to the impact of the event on the future government, Parkes made no comments that indicate his understanding of the growing concentration of power of the government in the hands of leaders from a few *han*. Instead, he concluded that since government personnel changes occurred rapidly in Japan, the new government led by Iwakura (unlike many historians he did not see Okubo as the dominant figure) would probably see the inclusion of some of the ex-*Sangi*. This was possible, he claimed, as Soejima, Saigo, Eto and Itagaki appeared to have formed themselves into an opposition and to have gained the support of Sanjo, who was still nominally Prime Minister, and Shimazu Hisamitsu (Saburo), the old prince of Satsuma, whose influence would be valuable to any administration.<sup>22</sup> While there is no clear account by later historians of Sanjo and Shimazu in late 1873 taking the ex-*Sangi*'s side, the possibility that these high-

<sup>19</sup> FO 46/168, No. 90, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, October 27, 1873.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 91, Conf., November 3, 1873.

<sup>21</sup> For the attempt to undermine Sat-Cho monopoly by government members who were not from the two leading former *han*, see Beasley, *Modern History*, p. 115.

<sup>22</sup> FO 46/168, No. 102, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, December 8, 1873.

ranking men may have sympathized with the opponents of the winning side is an intriguing one which cannot be discounted. The personnel changes as speculated by Parkes did take place in 1875 as Soejima, Goto and Itagaki briefly resumed government office. Saigo however, retired from politics and withdrew to Kagoshima, while Eto returned to Hizen.<sup>23</sup>

In 1874, when the Meiji government undertook a military expedition to Taiwan to punish the aboriginal tribes of that island for crimes against Ryukyuans, British diplomats again observed a division of views in the Meiji government when two Japanese leaders, namely Kido and Katsu Awa tendered their resignations over a probable conflict with China over Taiwan. As in the case of Korea, Parkes attributed the expedition to the discontent felt among the samurai class following the anti-feudal reforms and to the fact that the government wished to avoid the problem at home by diverting samurai attention to Taiwan.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, Parkes also observed that it was an indirect result of Iwakura's actions in the October 1873 crisis. As he put it in May 1874: 'The consequences of these highhanded proceedings [in 1873] were soon seen in the attempt made upon his life and in the Saga insurrection, the spread of which was only checked by the Government allowing the discontented samurai to engage in the profitless expedition against Formosa.'<sup>25</sup> As with the Korean issue where he emphasized the importance of internal reforms and the fruitlessness of a war, Parkes criticised the Japanese expedition on the grounds that it would involve the country in an unnecessary military conflict with China and injure the country's finances.<sup>26</sup>

Following the conclusion of the Taiwan question, the Japanese government endeavoured to reconcile their political opponents and strengthen the administration. As Parkes saw it, they had reason to do so, for apart from the ex-*Sangi* who had resigned their office over the Korean war in October 1873, Kido's departure over the Taiwan question was an important loss to the government. In the hope of reconciling the disaffected Japanese statesmen, meetings were held in Osaka in January 1875 in which Okubo, Inoue, Ito and several other members of the government met Kido, Goto, Itagaki, and other leading men of the opposition. The negotiations finally ended with a formal compact between Okubo, Kido and Itagaki on February 11, in which they pledged themselves to return to Tokyo to implement a mutually agreed reform program towards a gradual establishment of representative government. As far as Parkes was concerned, his

<sup>23</sup> Sims, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> FO 46/178, No. 61, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 6, 1874.

<sup>25</sup> FO 46/179, No. 88, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 22, 1874.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., FO 46/178, No. 61, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 6, 1874.

reports show only a limited understanding of this episode. He touched briefly on the results of the reconciliation attempt, namely the return of Kido to Tokyo and the fact that Goto, Itagaki and Soejima had been won over to the government side and observed that 'the Government appear to have obtained a measure of success,' but his lack of inside knowledge was shown by his admission that the 'precise character of the arrangements which have been effected, or the conditions upon which the support of the late dissentients has been secured, are not yet known.'<sup>27</sup> Another dispatch was no less vague, though written about one month later: 'Nothing has occurred since then to denote that any other result has been attained than that of composing in some degree those personal dissensions which had previously existed.'<sup>28</sup>

In contrast, the resignation of Shimazu and Itagaki at the end of 1875 attracted greater attention from British diplomats, particularly Parkes, who described it as a 'serious dissension' in the Japanese government. However, rather than seeing the resignations as part of the broader picture of 1875 politics,<sup>29</sup> Parkes concentrated more narrowly on Shimazu's political maneuvering and position in the Japanese government. The event, in his view, occurred because Shimazu had attempted to form a party in order to oust the leading members of the government, who had rejected his proposal for the maintenance of feudalism. Shimazu's plan, as Parkes described it, was to place Prince Arisugawa, a near relation of the Mikado, at the nominal head of the movement, while among the *Sangi*, he looked for support from Itagaki. It was arranged that all three should present to the Emperor separate memorials denouncing the Prime Minister Sanjo and calling for his dismissal, and that Shimazu and Itagaki should proclaim that unless their memorials met with a favourable reception, they would resign their office.<sup>30</sup> Parkes's assumption that Shimazu played a more active role than Itagaki in forming the coalition to oust Sanjo runs counter to more recent historical views,<sup>31</sup> but in view of the complexity of political relationships in this period, it arguably should not be dismissed too easily. It is also possible that Parkes's emphasis on Shimazu's maneuver was due to the renowned conservatism of the Satsuma prince. Such conservatism may be seen in Shimazu's memorial to the Mikado, on which Parkes commented unfavourably that it 'forcibly exhibits his impracticable character as well as his hostility to Foreigners and the advance of modern education.' He also dismissed the memorials by Itagaki and Arisugawa, noting

<sup>27</sup> FO 46/191, No. 36, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, March 8, 1875.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 57, April 13, 1875.

<sup>29</sup> See Fraser, A., 'The Osaka Conference of 1875', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI: No. 4, August 1967, pp. 603, 606-609.

<sup>30</sup> FO 46/194, No. 159, Parkes to Derby, Hyogo, November 23, 1875.

that they did not add to their authors' reputation.<sup>32</sup>

While the resignation of Shimazu and Itagaki may not have been fully understood by the British minister, it prompted some noteworthy reflections on the growing confidence of the Meiji government. Parkes commented that it 'may have occasioned them as well as the public some surprize to find that the Government at once accepted their resignations' and this, he added, 'appears to show that the latter are confident in their own strength and feel that they are able to cope with the waning influence of Shimadzu and the reactionary party he represents.' Parkes further maintained that the confidence shown by government was certainly a new development in contrast to the earlier period when 'the adhesion of Shimadzu Saburo ... at a time when everything depended upon the consolidation of its power was felt to be necessary in order to conciliate the Satsuma clan and the Samurai or armed class which Shimadzu may be said to represent.' The fact that the re-publishing of the conscription law of 1872 was effected at the very moment when Shimazu and Itagaki resigned their office was, to Parkes, another proof of the increasing assurance felt by the government: it was meant 'to re-affirm in unmistakeable terms the rejection by the Government of ... [Shimazu's] proposal to maintain the military privileges of the Samurai' as advocated in his memorial to the Mikado.<sup>33</sup> Despite Parkes's conviction of the weakening influence of Shimazu, after his departure on leave *Chargé d'Affaires* Francis Plunkett observed that 'although obliged to succumb to his opponents in the Cabinet, his influence was still so great,' that the government did not wish to break with him entirely, and for this reason, he had been appointed to a high honorary post in the Emperor's household on November 25.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Emergence of the People's Rights Movement**

Another significant development in 1871-1877 was the emergence of the People's Rights movement (*Jiyū minken undo*). While later historians show a great deal of interest in this subject, British diplomatic correspondence, however, gives little attention to its development.

In view of the prominent role in it played by Okuma Shigenobu in the 1880s, however, it is interesting that he was reported by Legation Secretary R. G. Watson in November 1872 as maintaining that 'it would be a long time ere education would be so

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<sup>31</sup> E.g., Fraser, *op. cit.*, pp. 598-608.

<sup>32</sup> FO 46/194, No. 159, Parkes to Derby, Hyogo, November 23, 1875. For details on Shimazu and Itagaki's memorials, see Beckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>33</sup> FO 46/194, No. 159, Parkes to Derby, Hyogo, November 23, 1875.

general throughout Japan as to make it safe to entrust the people with the power of electing representatives who should have a share in governing the country.<sup>135</sup> A similarly unfavourable view was also expressed by Iwakura to British diplomats. In a conversation with Parkes on April 3, 1875, he asserted that he did not think the cry for the creation of a parliament or a popular representative assembly, which had become so common, could yet be entertained, and that the most that could be done by the government was to promote the establishment of *Ken* (prefectural) and *Ku* (district) assemblies. Parkes did not disclose his personal views of the popular movement at that time, and his reference in the same dispatch to the broad debate on the formation of popular assemblies in the Japanese press also left his attitude unclear: 'It would appear that the love of the Japanese for change and progress is now carrying them on to the discussion of such grave questions as popular representation and religious toleration, and if that of taxation - the pressure of which is now becoming felt - be added to the former, the attention of the Government may be seriously occupied for some time to come.'<sup>136</sup> Earlier, when the five *Sangi* resigned from government in October 1873, Parkes noted that one of the causes was that 'they advocated reform in the present arbitrary constitution of the Government, the institution of a Parliament,'<sup>137</sup> although he did not comment on this aim or elaborate as to whether all the ex-*Sangi* shared the ideal of a representative government. More surprisingly, neither Parkes nor other diplomats noted the memorial presented to the government on January 17, 1874 by the ex-*Sangi* Soejima, Eto, Goto and Itagaki, which called for the establishment of representative institutions as foreshadowed in the Imperial Oath of April 1868, and which is regarded by most historians as a landmark in the People's Rights movement.<sup>138</sup>

Following the implementation of the points agreed during the Osaka conference, Chargé d'Affaires Plunkett did report on the establishment of the *Genrō-in* (Senate) and the *Daishin-in* (Assembly of Framing Laws) by an Imperial decree of April 14, 1875. Nevertheless, he gave no details of the duties or prerogatives of the two new assemblies or the manner in which their members were to be appointed or elected. The lack of information was evidently due largely to the reluctance on the part of Meiji leaders to provide relevant details, as Plunkett maintained that several attempts by foreign representatives to gain information from Japanese Ministers had been fruitless.

<sup>134</sup> FO 46/195, No. 171, Plunkett to Derby, Yedo, December 13, 1875.

<sup>135</sup> FO 46/156, No. 146, Watson to Granville, Yedo, November 11, 1872.

<sup>136</sup> FO 46/191, No. 57, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 13, 1875.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 36, March 8, 1875.

<sup>138</sup> E.g., Sims, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51; Vlastos, S., 'Opposition Movement in Early Meiji, 1868-1885', in Jansen,

Nevertheless, this did not stop him from critically suggesting that they would provide a further example of what he saw as the hasty and ill-considered adoption of Western systems by the Meiji government:

It is indeed very probable that they really have not come to any final conclusion as yet, and have, in their usual heedless way of adopting Foreign Institutions, promulgated these Decrees without precisely thinking of the numerous changes which must inevitably follow, if the thing is to have any functional value. So far as we can judge at present, it appears the new assemblies are to consist entirely of Govt. nominees, and will therefore be only a larger kind of Privy Council without any representative character.<sup>39</sup>

He further observed that while foreigners in Japan were much excited over these changes, the ordinary Japanese themselves cared little about them, adding that 'the 4 governing clans [Satsuma, Choshu, Hizen and Tosa] will maintain in these new assemblies the same influence they have hitherto exercised directly on the Govt.'<sup>40</sup> A negative comment was also made by Parkes on the *Genrō-in*. Reporting in May, he observed that the interest attached by foreigners to the creation of the *Genrō-in* was already dying away 'although the measure is still only in embryo.' This was because, as he wrote on May 23, 1875,

It [the *Genrō-in*] appears to me to be simply a Council of State. Foreigners often commit the mistake of applying the names of their own institutions to measures which may only faintly resemble the former in some respects but which as a whole will not bear the same appellation. Thus this new measure of the Japanese has been called a Senate and a Parliament, but it is certainly neither one nor the other. It is to be occupied with legislation, but only such legislation as the Govt. chooses to send to it, & it is composed as yet of men of no great note. I question whether the Government themselves know what the measure will lead to.<sup>41</sup>

As to the future influence of the newly established *Genrō-in* on Japanese politics, Parkes could merely speculate, stating that it would either be an extension of the government's control or would be in conflict with the ruling authority if its members should seek to obtain independence for the body. In the latter case, 'it may grow into something, but at present it is simply an experiment, & one which I rather fear will increase rather than allay political divisions and disputes.'<sup>42</sup> Nothing in his report suggests that he was aware

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*Cambridge History*, p. 402.

<sup>39</sup> FO 46/191, Private, Plunkett to Tenterden, Yedo, April 27, 1875.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* In line with Plunkett's view, McLaren maintains that the absolutist principle was retained in the establishment of the *Genrō-in*. McLaren, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>41</sup> FO 46/191, Private, Parkes to Tenterden, Yedo, May 23, 1875.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

of either Itagaki's and his supporters' plan to strengthen the power of the *Genrō-in* to check the proceedings of executive departments, or the government's response to their attempt, which resulted in the revision of the power of *Genrō-in*.<sup>43</sup>

In contrast to his views on the *Genrō-in*, Parkes was less skeptical about the Assembly of Local Officials, which he believed to have been planned by the government as a check to the demand for popular representation by Soejima and other ex-Ministers who resigned in 1873. On the subjects of debates, such as roads, police, poor relief, primary education and the institution of local assemblies, Parkes expressed the view in June 1875 that 'it is hoped that it will bring the Government into closer union with the people and will eventually lead to the establishment of such popular institutions as are suited to the condition and wants of the country.'<sup>44</sup> Parkes's mentioning of Japanese need to consider the wants of the people and country is significant in view of his post-1878 comments, which were rather unsympathetic to the idea of representative government in Japan.

In 1877, when the Satsuma rebellion was in progress, Parkes did note growing activity by the People's Rights movement in Tosa. In his report of May 10, Parkes observed that the situation 'is occasioning the Government fresh disquiet' as it was feared that a rising headed by Itagaki, one of the ex-*Sangi*, would take place in that province. He added that not only did Itagaki demand the establishment of a representative assembly, but also declared his readiness to die in the cause of liberty if this measure were longer withheld.<sup>45</sup>

Of the early political associations formed under the influence of the People's Rights movement, two, the *Risshisha* and *Seikensha*, are mentioned in diplomatic correspondence. Parkes observed that these associations were the most prominent as both presented memorials to the government on what Parkes called 'the subject of the defects in the Administration.' Of the two memorials, the one by the *Risshisha*, according to Parkes, 'possesses considerable merit,' and 'may be expected to have some effect on the Counsels of the Government.'<sup>46</sup> And it was the soundness of the *Risshisha*'s memorial that led Parkes to make the interesting comment that the moderate conduct of its leader, Itagaki, who 'appears to be endeavouring to reform, by constitutional means, and in the interest of the nation at large, the abuses of which he thinks he has a right to complain

<sup>43</sup> See Fraser, *op. cit.*, pp. 603-605 for further details on the political struggle over the *Genrō-in*.

<sup>44</sup> FO 46/192, No. 80, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 23, 1875.

<sup>45</sup> FO 46/218, No. 73, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 10, 1877.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 95, June 28, 1877. The *Risshisha* and *Seikensha* were founded in 1874 to give support and assistance to the samurai in the provinces who had lost much of their traditional status and income.



...entitles him to some consideration, and his arguments, if not listened to by the Government at the present date while they are so fully engaged in the suppression of the Satsuma rebellion, can scarcely fail to command attention at a later period.<sup>47</sup> However, diplomats seem to have been unaware of other political associations which played a significant role in the early stages of the People's Rights movement, such as the *Aikokukōtō*, the first political society in Japan formed in Tokyo in January 1874, and a larger association, the *Aikokusha*, organized in February 1875.<sup>48</sup>

### **Effects of the Dismantling of Feudalism: Peasant Uprisings**

Following *haihan chicken* in August 1871, a steady stream of ordinances was issued by the Council of State and the various administrative departments, regulating the habits and customs of the people, as well as announcing an elaborate programme of railway and telegraph construction. These reforming measures included the abolition of the rigid feudal caste system based upon occupation, military conscription, a series of land laws and new land tax system, the introduction of a universal public system of education, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, the commutation of samurai stipends and the prohibition of wearing swords by samurai.<sup>49</sup>

After the Meiji government announced *haihan chicken* in 1871, one diplomat expressed some apprehension. Following an interview with Iwakura in September 1871 in which he was told of the changes in the *ken* and future plans for a gradual employment of men of talent in the public service, the extension of each department's power throughout the country, and the redemption of local paper money by official notes, Chargé d'Affaires Adams commented that the government might not be able to carry out the extensive scheme 'without some disturbances and even bloodshed.' One future source of danger, in Adams's view, was the opposition of the peasantry whose discontent over the levy of heavy taxes by the central authority would be taken advantage of by low-class samurai, who had lost both income and position by the change in the government, and who consequently were always ready to stir up the peasantry to revolt.<sup>50</sup>

In marked contrast, some Meiji leaders expressed their confidence in the reforms to British diplomats. Adams, for instance, noted that Kido treated redemption of local paper

<sup>47</sup> FO 46/218, No. 95, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 28, 1877.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., Sims, *op. cit.*, pp. 51; Akita, G., *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan 1868-1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press), 1967, pp. 17-18.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., see works by Gubbins, J. H., *The Making of Modern Japan* (London: Seeley, Service & Co.) 1922 and *The Progress of Japan 1853-1871* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1911.

<sup>50</sup> FO 46/141, No. 63, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, September 8, 1871.

paper money and the future condition of the *ex-daimyo* as not involving any cause for alarm, and 'his general language, like that of all reformers of his class, is that of unlimited confidence in the future.'<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Satow observed from his conversations with some Japanese leaders, that while it was estimated that the commutation of stipends and the redemption of local paper money would cost the government as much as thirty million *ryo*, or six million pounds, it did not excite any anxiety on the part of the government.<sup>52</sup>

Adams's apprehension appeared partly justified by the outbreak of a commotion in Hiroshima *Ken* (Geishiu) in October 1871, when the people did not allow their *daimyo* to go to Tokyo as ordered by the central government, and the government was forced to use military force to suppress the disturbance.<sup>53</sup> A few months later, Adams reported an intrusion into the Court's compound by a band of priests who were opposed to the abolition of feudalism and the friendly policy to foreigners.<sup>54</sup> It is probable that because of these commotions, diplomats noted a slight change in the Meiji leadership's tone of confidence regarding the abolition of feudalism. For instance, in a meeting with Satow in October, Iwakura revealed how he had feared that the abolition of the *han* could not be effected without bloodshed.<sup>55</sup> In a conversation on May 16, 1872, Prime Minister Sanjo similarly admitted to Adams that it was at first not certain what would be the effect of the conversion of the *han* into *ken*, and that it was felt that some time might elapse before the change was peacefully acquiesced in by the nation. Nevertheless, while Sanjo added that the last few months had far exceeded the expectations of the government, and that the new order of things had been accepted by the people, Adams continued to be skeptical. As he observed to Lord Granville, 'I am inclined to think that it is too early to take it for granted that all anxiety with respect to the carrying out of the decree of the 29th August last is at an end. No serious troubles have broken out, but it is undeniable that there is much discontent in various parts of the country'. He then added that it would probably take a year before the people of Japan could be seen to have really settled down to the new order of things.<sup>56</sup>

Parkes, though viewing the situation primarily in terms of the security of foreigners in the country, was more optimistic about the future of Japan. Pointing to the growing power and strength of the Meiji government, he maintained in March 1872 that

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 80, Conf., September 18, 1871.

<sup>52</sup> Satow's memorandum encl. in *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> FO 46/143, No. 122, Adams to Granville, December 2, 1871; FO 46/151, No. 5, Adams to Granville, Yedo, January 6, 1872.

<sup>54</sup> FO 46/153, No. 70, Adams to Granville, Yedo, April 16, 1872.

<sup>55</sup> PRO 30/33/15/4, Satow's Diary, October 24, 1871.

<sup>56</sup> FO 46/153, No. 92, Conf., Adams to Granville, Yedo, May 20, 1872.

while Japan during the last ten years had been 'the theatre of revolution and change' and 'all the other parts of the country were more or less convulsed,' the Japanese government was of opinion that it was strong enough to undertake the protection of foreigners unaided. Parkes apparently believed in the government's claim, since he concluded that it was to be hoped that circumstances would shortly permit the British and French government to favourably consider its request for the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country.<sup>57</sup>

A still more optimistic view was held by Watson. In commenting on some erroneous statements in English newspapers in 1872, which proclaimed that full religious toleration had been proclaimed throughout Japan, that the Mikado himself had embraced Christianity, and that Japan had achieved a surplus in its finance, he wrote to Granville that these misunderstandings should not be wondered at since the revolution which had taken place in Japan 'has been so complete.'<sup>58</sup> Similarly, on the question of the desirability of maintaining the presence of a Battalion of the Royal Marines at Yokohama in case of troubles in Japan, Watson observed in December 1872:

I feel bound to state that I do not perceive any symptoms which might justify one in concluding that there is any reason to anticipate a counter-Revolution. The actual Government, which is conducted under the immediate authority of the Mikado, appears to possess all the elements of strength, being composed partly of Noblemen of high hereditary position, and partly of men of practical acquaintance with affairs, who have risen to their present positions by virtue of ability, and as a consequence of the services which they rendered in bringing about the Revolution. The people of Japan, who are docile and orderly, can scarcely fail to perceive in the Public Works which have been carried out under the auspices of the actual Government; in the Educational System which has been inaugurated by it; and in the Army and Navy which have sprung up under its hands; evidences of a constant solicitude to advance the interests of the State; nor can the Government be accused by those who have fallen of ruling on behalf of a Class or of a Party, since they at the present moment support the whole body of the Samurai, and since posts of high importance in all parts of the country are confided to officers who belonged to the interests of the Taikun. ...It therefore seems to me ...there is every reason to hope that the established order of things in Japan will endure.<sup>59</sup>

Given such encouraging factors, Watson concluded that there was no reason for maintaining the British force in Japan any longer, especially when the presence of foreign

<sup>57</sup> FO 46/152, Parkes's memorandum on 'British Troops in Japan', London, March 7, 1872.

<sup>58</sup> FO 46/156, No. 146, Watson to Granville, Yedo, November 11, 1872.

troops was also a 'continued eyesore to a liberal Government and to a sensitive people'.

Nevertheless, doubts were cast on the optimistic assumptions of Parkes and Watson when serious peasant uprisings broke out in such different parts of Japan as Echizen, Hojo, Fukuoka and other districts, particularly in 1873 and in 1876. Several causes were pointed out by diplomats for the revolts, one being the new Meiji land tax system of July 1873, which among its new features established a tax rate at a uniform three per cent. of the monetary value and payment in cash directly to the state by each owner. In return, tax-payers were given title deeds that endowed full rights of ownership. In his report on the peasant insurrections which broke out in July 1873, Parkes explained,

The recent changes in the revenue system by which the farmer or peasant has to pay his taxes in money instead of in kind as hitherto, is probably the chief cause of the prevailing discontent. Poorly provided as the country is with roads, it is often difficult for the peasant to turn his corn into coin in order to meet the demands of the Government, and the question of the rate at which the payment should be commuted from kind to money must vary according to the circumstances of each district and must occasion endless altercation between the people and the tax collectors.<sup>60</sup>

In addition, Parkes asserted that the people also objected to 'incessant enactments' by the central government on various subjects such as religion, education, conscription, clothing, mode of wearing the hair, the calendar, additional taxes on numerous articles of consumption, etc., that 'the annoyances resulting from this hasty and over legislation is at last producing resistance.' Furthermore, there were also different reasons for uprisings in different parts of Japan such as the suppression of Buddhism in favour of Shintoism in Echizen, the demand of the people in Tottori *ken* to prohibit the passing of foreigners through their district, and the clamour of the people in some districts for 'a return to the former rules of administration.'<sup>61</sup>

At least one diplomat attached some importance to the role played by former retainers of Aizu in inciting the agrarian class to rise against the government in the early 1870s. On the peasant insurrection which had been suppressed by the Japanese authorities in Niigata in 1872, Acting Consul James Enslie asserted that given the feeling of discontent among the people, 'another rising will probably take place which may

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 168, December 19, 1872.

<sup>60</sup> FO 46/167, No. 39, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 8, 1873. Nevertheless, while the measure is generally accepted by later historians to be one of the main causes for peasant uprisings during the Meiji period, no historian seems to have specifically ascribed the early uprisings to the new tax system, as Parkes did, since the implementation of the measure took some years to become effective and was not complete until 1881.

<sup>61</sup> FO 46/167, No. 39, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 8, 1873. See the encl. memorandum by Aston, Yedo, July 7, 1871. For works on peasant uprisings see e.g., Bix, H. P., *Peasant Protest in Japan, 1590-1884*

possibly be supported by the retainers of some of the old Northern Daimios, especially those of Aizu who are dissatisfied with their present position.<sup>62</sup> This was based on the fact that the suppressed uprising in the district, according to Enslie, had been led by two Aizu samurai.<sup>63</sup> Enslie's observation is of particular interest because it points to a factor which has mostly escaped historians' attention. By contrast, British diplomatic reports make no mention of what some recent historians view as other common causes for peasant uprisings in the 1870s, namely intra-village conflicts<sup>64</sup> and new changes in the local administration that involved the continuous shifting and redefinition of administrative boundaries of prefectures and districts, and the appointment of new officials who were normally outsiders - changes which affected traditional bonds to old lord and locality.<sup>65</sup>

On the question of the government's handling of the peasant uprisings, Parkes in July 1873 asserted the need for a tactical approach, arguing that the authorities should exercise 'more care and less haste in the enforcement of their decrees relative to the all important question of taxation as well as in regard to the numerous social innovations which they have started without first preparing the minds of the people for such changes.' Interestingly, he reflected on the earlier memorial by Inoue and Shibusawa, published in 1873, and suggested that these outbreaks confirmed the charges levelled by the two Japanese statesmen against the government's method of administration.<sup>66</sup> The need to move cautiously was necessary, British diplomats maintained, because the early uprisings in 1872 and 1873 were serious enough to endanger the new and young Meiji administration. Enslie, for instance, reported that had it not been for the prompt action of the local authorities and a want of leadership on the part of the rebel leaders, the Niigata uprising in 1872 might have proved a very serious threat to the government.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Secretary of Legation Watson in Tokyo observed of the same event that 'in the present state of affairs in this country, even a temporary success over the Government troops

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(New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press), 1986.

<sup>62</sup> Enslie's report on 'Insurrection of the Peasantry at Niigata', May 1872 encl. in FO 46/154, No. 48, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 29, 1872.

<sup>63</sup> Enslie's report to Adams, Niigata, May 28, 1872 encl. in FO 46/154, No. 29, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 8, 1872.

<sup>64</sup> According to Vlastos, nearly half of the incidents during this period were results of conflicts originated by the depravity of village headmen, landlord-tenant relations, hoarding of rice, foreclosure of loans, and other issues that affected the general welfare of the villages but did not directly involve the central government. *Op. cit.*, p. 308.

<sup>65</sup> E.g., Vlastos, *op. cit.*, p. 370; Waters, N. L., *Japan's Local Pragmatists: The Transition From Bakumatsu to Meiji in the Kawasaki Region* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press), 1983, p. 64.

<sup>66</sup> FO 46/167, No. 39, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 8, 1873.

<sup>67</sup> Enslie to Adams, Niigata, May 28, 1872 encl. in FO 46/154, No. 29, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 8, 1872.

might be attended with the most serious consequence,' adding that the suppression of the uprising was not sufficient to deter men from organising similar attempts since 'the wrongs of which the peasantry complain are by no means imaginary.'<sup>68</sup> In view of his earlier positive comment, deprecating the likelihood of counter-revolution in Japan, Watson's statement marks a significant change in his perception of the development in the country. Parkes's optimism also waned in 1873. In commenting on an article that appeared in *Japan Mail* in August 1873, in which thousands of insurgents were reported to have been involved in one uprising, in some instances attacking government offices and killing the officials, Parkes wrote that, 'though the object of the paper is to show that these troubles were of a trivial character, and the claims of the insurgents unreasonable, it incidentally bears witness to the grave dimensions which some of these risings assumed,' and which to him, 'must have occasioned the government some concern.'<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, by 1876, in view of the government's success in suppressing the early insurrections, a growing confidence was felt in the government's ability to counter the peasant uprisings that broke out in that year. In a report to Derby of December 30, 1876, Parkes observed that 'There is no immediate danger to be apprehended from the outbreaks. They are periodical in Japan and have always been easily suppressed by the authorities.' This was because, he explained, few, if any samurai joined the rioters, and the samurai in several places gave efficient help to the authorities. In support of this judgement, Parkes maintained that in the case of Ibaragi *Ken*, the local authorities' force which suppressed the insurgent peasants was formed from police and about one hundred samurai, while in Ise the insurgents had to face a small body of samurai, who killed some of them, before they were entirely repulsed by the garrison of Nagoya.<sup>70</sup>

When the government announced in January 1877 its reduction of the land-tax from three percent on the assessed value of the land to two and a half percent, Parkes observed, 'there can be little doubt that such extensive concessions will be effective in allaying the widespread dissatisfaction which the present system of collecting the Land-tax had caused.' He also praised the government for making a heavy sacrifice in its land revenue by adopting such a policy, which 'renders necessary considerable curtailment in the expenditure of every department of the administration,' and observed that it would be approved by the general population of Japan.<sup>71</sup> His anticipation was more or less justified as serious uprisings no longer occurred following the government's concession.

<sup>68</sup> FO 46/154, No. 48, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 29, 1872.

<sup>69</sup> FO 46/168, No. 81, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, October 6, 1873.

<sup>70</sup> FO 46/209, No. 199, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, December 30, 1876.

<sup>71</sup> FO 46/216, No. 5, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, January 8, 1877.

### Samurai Uprisings

A still more serious repercussion of the dismantling of feudalism in Japan was a spate of samurai uprisings. Throughout the years 1871-77, many such outbreaks occurred, the most serious being the revolt in Hizen in 1874, the uprisings which broke out simultaneously in the southern part of the country in 1876, notably in Kumamoto, Fukuoka and Choshu, and finally the Satsuma rebellion in 1877.

Like the peasant uprisings, these outbreaks were observed by British diplomats in Japan with great interest. In fact, it is worthy of note that uprisings involving samurai had already been anticipated by Adams in September 1871, though this may not be said of other diplomats. Parkes, for instance, upon his return to Japan in March 1873, voiced his satisfaction that 'the condition of political affairs appears to be undisturbed.' Not only did he assert that the rumours of disaffection in Satsuma were without foundation, but he noted that the outbreak that was reported in Echizen had been promptly suppressed.<sup>72</sup>

As to the causes of the uprisings, British diplomats pointed out the dissatisfaction felt by samurai class with the anti-feudal reforms by the Meiji government, one being the commutation of their stipends or allowances. This was confirmed by Japanese Foreign Minister Terajima, during a meeting with Parkes on October 30 regarding the 1876 uprisings.<sup>73</sup> Significantly, several British diplomats were somewhat critical of the government's commutation of stipends and sympathized with the samurai. Parkes's sympathy, in particular, is astonishing considering that he had often been critical of the class for its conservative approach and fanatical character, and had once nearly lost his life at the hands some of its members. For instance, following the Hizen outbreak in early 1874, Parkes's assessment was that the government 'with a strange want of foresight have devised no effective plan for utilizing the services of these men, nor for making adequate provision for their support.' He further added that though in 1874 the scheme was not yet put forward as compulsory, 'it denotes plainly enough the niggardly spirit in which the Government are disposed to deal with the question.'<sup>74</sup> Consul John Quin at Nagasaki, who supplied Parkes with information on the Hizen insurrection, also held a similar opinion. As he put it in March 1874: 'When such men are injudiciously treated by the government, outbreak will naturally follow.'<sup>75</sup> Two years later when the measure was

<sup>72</sup> FO 46/166, No. 1, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, March 31, 1873.

<sup>73</sup> FO 46/208, No. 172, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 30, 1876.

<sup>74</sup> FO 46/177, No. 27, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 16, 1874.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 43, March 9, 1874.

made compulsory upon samurai, Parkes argued, in the wake of samurai outbreak at Kumamoto and other places, that 'In order, however, to preserve tranquility in the country it is incumbent on them to treat even the Samurai with justice, and it is doubtful whether they can be said to have done this in respect to the recent reduction of their incomes.'<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, he observed that the bulk of the samurai had also already declined to accept the commutation proposals of the government as their attempts to make a livelihood in trade or in other industrial callings using the small capital received from the government seldom proved successful owing to their inexperience of business.<sup>77</sup>

Another source of samurai grievance, as diplomats saw it, was the government measure to deprive them of their swords. This was also admitted to Parkes by Foreign Minister Terajima in their meeting of the October 30.<sup>78</sup> The measure was so strongly opposed by Satsuma samurai that their objection was noted even before it was made compulsory in March 1876. As Vice-Consul John Hodges reported in January 1876, in contrast to samurai of other provinces in Japan who had gradually abandoned the practice, 'The wearing of swords is not yet discontinued in the Kagoshima Ken, and to judge from appearances seems to rule rather than the exception.'<sup>79</sup> Parkes himself noted Satsuma's reluctance when reporting in February 1877 that although observing outwardly to some extent the government decree, the samurai in Satsuma 'have never been disarmed, and under the name of establishing schools for this particular class, they have formed and maintained among themselves a formidable military organization.'<sup>80</sup>

Another reason for discontent among the samurai was the conscription law, which deprived the samurai of their monopoly of military service. Given their dislike of the feudal armed class, conscription was, unsurprisingly, welcomed by British diplomats. This may be seen in Satow's comment in 1871 when, supporting the replacing of the samurai with a new army raised and drilled in European fashion, he asserted that 'It is time for them to be reabsorbed and to become traders and agriculturalists.'<sup>81</sup> Although not explicit in approving of the reform, Parkes noted that the object of the creation of a large regular army was not only for national defence, but also to keep the samurai under control.<sup>82</sup> However, unlike the commutation of stipends and prohibition of wearing

<sup>76</sup> FO 46/209, No. 174, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, November 11, 1876.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 176, November 13, 1876. For more details on the commutation scheme, see e.g., McLaren, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-89.

<sup>78</sup> FO 46/208, No. 172, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 30, 1876.

<sup>79</sup> Hodges's memorandum, January 1, 1876 encl. in FO 46/203, No. 27, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 7, 1876.

<sup>80</sup> FO 46/216, No. 25, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 19, 1877.

<sup>81</sup> Satow's memorandum in FO 46/141, No. 80, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, September 18, 1871.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., FO 46/182, No. 169, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 12, 1874.



swords, the conscription law formally introduced in 1873 was less emphasized by British diplomats as a reason for samurai uprisings although Acting-Consul Joseph W. Longford did report that the origin of the Kumamoto uprising in 1876 lay in 'the objections on the part of the Samurai to becoming farmers or traders.'<sup>83</sup>

Another relevant factor was felt to be anti-foreign sentiment among samurai which, as noted by Parkes during the Hizen uprising, was used to appeal for popular support.<sup>84</sup> While Parkes doubted its ability to generate a satisfactory response in 1874, he observed that the sentiment was also invoked by the insurgent samurai in the later uprisings in 1876 at Kumamoto.<sup>85</sup> For his part, Vice-consul Longford unequivocally attributed the Kumamoto disturbance to 'a hatred of foreign customs,' the adoption of which was considered 'an outrage on the ancient spirit of Japan.'<sup>86</sup>

The government's abandonment of the military expedition to Korea in 1873 was also considered to have partly contributed to the samurai uprisings. In the case of Hizen, Parkes mentioned to Granville that the samurai demanded the war as it 'would bring them employment, pay, plunder, and the other attractions of a soldier's life.'<sup>87</sup> The same view was also held by John Quin, British Consul at Nagasaki.<sup>88</sup> The relevance, albeit indirect, of the Korean split to the Satsuma rebellion, was confirmed to Parkes by Saigo Tsugumichi in February 1877 when the latter stated that 'a war at that time would have been the best thing for Japan,' adding that if Eto and his brother, Saigo Takamori, had remained in Tokyo, the insurrections in Hizen and Satsuma would never have taken place. Parkes's response, interestingly, was that it was perhaps better to have had this conflict at home than to have had a war with China.<sup>89</sup>

Despite this remark, British diplomats recognized the gravity of samurai uprisings. Parkes himself, for instance, upon hearing about the outbreak in Hizen in early 1874, reported to Granville that 'the Government will find their energies seriously taxed before they succeed in restoring quiet and satisfying the claims of the malcontents.'<sup>90</sup> In mid-February, he reported several indicators of increasing anxiety in Tokyo. These included an abortive attempt by Iwakura to quit his position as Deputy Prime Minister,

<sup>83</sup> Longford's memorandum, October 30, 1876, in FO 46/208, No. 172, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 30, 1876.

<sup>84</sup> FO 46/177, No. 27, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 16, 1874.

<sup>85</sup> FO 46/208, No. 172, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 30, 1876.

<sup>86</sup> Longford's memorandum of October 30, 1876 in *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> FO 46/177, No. 27, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 16, 1874. Also see *Ibid.*, No. 26, Conf., February 9, 1874.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 43, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, March 9, 1874.

<sup>89</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, April 16, 1877; Also see FO 46/216, No. 25, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 19, 1877.

<sup>90</sup> FO 46/177, No. 26, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 9, 1874.

and an admission by the Japanese Foreign Minister to one foreign representative that the government might be induced to sanction war with Korea if that step were found necessary to avert civil strife.<sup>91</sup> In a dispatch to Admiral Shadwell, Parkes expressed concern that the movement 'appears a grave one because the insurgents are Samurai, or men of the armed class,' and it was believed that 'they are supported by persons of ranks who recently held prominent positions in the Government.'<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, Parkes was skeptical whether the pacification of the insurgents would be achieved by sending Home Minister Okubo to Hizen. This was because, as he observed to Granville, Okubo, though a Satsuma man, was 'not in favor with the Samurai, who look upon him as faithless to their interests.' Moreover, Parkes was also concerned about the degree of reliance by the government on their newly formed regular army, which he claimed, was noted for 'numerous desertions from their ranks.' He further worried that since the homes of the deserters were mostly in Kyushu or in the adjoining island of Shikoku, they might join the Hizen insurgents.<sup>93</sup> Against these circumstances, Parkes pessimistically concluded that 'It is impossible at present to foresee the course or result of this movement, but disorder and insecurity of greater or less extent, may be looked for as a natural consequence,' so that it was uncertain 'whether this insurrection attains the dimensions of civil war, or culminates in hostilities with Corea.'<sup>94</sup>

So concerned were diplomats with the gravity of the problem that though there were reports by the late February that the movement was gradually being suppressed, Parkes maintained that the fact that such an insurrection had occurred, showed that 'much uncertainty attends the future course of events in this country.'<sup>95</sup> Even after the suppression of the rebellious Hizen samurai in March, Parkes stated that 'The want of discipline among this class may prove a source of trouble to the Government for some time to come.'<sup>96</sup> One month later, Parkes further observed that the suppression of the insurrection 'cannot be said to be marked with the restoration of quiet or of public confidence in the Government' and, somewhat vaguely, that the 'commercial class' seemed to apprehend more trouble. He added that the government was also divided on the Formosan question, and that resignations had been sent in by Kido, the Minister of

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 27, February 16, 1874.

<sup>92</sup> See the enclosed Parkes's dispatch to Shadwell, Yedo, February 16, 1874 in *ibid.*, No. 28, February 16, 1874.

<sup>93</sup> FO 46/177, No. 27, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 16, 1874.

<sup>94</sup> See the enclosed Parkes's dispatch to Shadwell, Yedo, February 16, 1874 in *ibid.*, No. 28, February 16, 1874.

<sup>95</sup> FO 46/177, No. 35, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 23, 1874.

<sup>96</sup> FO 46/178, No. 53, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, March 23, 1874.

Education, and Okuma, the Minister of Finance.<sup>97</sup> In June, he informed Lord Derby that

I feel, My Lord, that it is by no means easy to foretell the course of events in this country. The Government is far from being a strong one, their measures are those of the day only, and their duration of office appears uncertain. The Saga insurrection has been suppressed, and at present we hear of no fresh outbreak. But it is notorious that the Samurai, or armed class, who occasioned that insurrection, have only been quieted by being allowed to engage in the Formosan Expedition.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, by 1875, diplomats' perceptions were changing as they became more optimistic of Japan's future. The absence of further serious uprisings and the termination of the Formosan expedition may have contributed to this view. In response to Derby's question about the maintenance of British marines in Japan, Parkes replied,

Although I cannot attempt to forecast the future condition of this country it is satisfactory to me to be able to assure Your Lordship that I believe the Japanese Government are at present able to afford adequate protection to foreigners resident in their territory, and as I see no immediate prospect of their losing their power either by internal disorder or other causes, I consider it unnecessary that Her Majesty's Government should be longer called on to maintain a force in shore in Japan in order to give security to British subjects and their property.<sup>99</sup>

Given this view, in February 1875 Parkes announced to the Meiji leadership the British government's decision to withdraw its detachments from Japan. Interestingly, Iwakura, while expressing his appreciation to Parkes, confessed that he was not surprised that the British government had delayed until now the removal of its troops since 'until lately he himself had been by no means confident as to the course of events,' and he added that the attempt made in January 1874 upon his own life, and the internal and external troubles which had subsequently occurred, had created doubt as to the future of the country.<sup>100</sup>

The positive comments continued despite the subsequent uprisings in 1876, since diplomats observed the growing confidence of the Meiji government in its ability to quell samurai insurgents. On the outbreak in Kumamoto, Parkes reported that 'The general feeling appears to be that the Government will be able to cope with the difficulties it has to contend against, and suppress any riots that may take place.'<sup>101</sup> The growing assurance

<sup>97</sup> Parkes asserted that the former resigned because the Formosan expedition was undertaken, and the latter because it was temporarily postponed. *Ibid.*, No. 72, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 25, 1874.

<sup>98</sup> FO 46/180, No. 112, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 16, 1874.

<sup>99</sup> FO 46/190, No. 21, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, January 30, 1875.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 23, February 1, 1875.

<sup>101</sup> FO 46/209, No. 174, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, November 11, 1876. See the enclosed report from Marcus

felt by the government might perhaps be explained by the fact that by that time the regular army in Tokyo had increased in strength and discipline and could be better depended on to suppress any malcontents. Another possible reason was the increasing popular support for the government measures to end samurai privileges. As mentioned by Parkes in a report to Derby of November 1876 with regard to the compulsory commutation of samurai stipends, 'however unsatisfactory this arrangement for their future provision may be considered by the Samurai, it is regarded in a different light by the people, who hope to derive from it some relief from the present burden of taxation.' He also reported that when the decree for the enforced capitalization of the nobles' and samurai incomes appeared, it was largely discussed in the Japanese press, and popular opinion was unanimous in favour of the measure. The existence of such popular arguments, in Parkes's view, meant that 'the Samurai cannot look for sympathy from the people in their question with the Government.'<sup>102</sup>

The same confidence, however, was not evident during the Satsuma rebellion in 1877. When the government and Satsuma appeared to be on the brink of collision in February 1877, Parkes observed that 'without wishing to exaggerate the importance of the crisis, I cannot but regard it as the most serious one which the Mikado's Government have had to encounter since they came into power.'<sup>103</sup> It was due to the seriousness of the imminent rebellion that Parkes sent Satow to Kagoshima to learn about feeling there. Satow confirmed the gravity of the problem by noting that it was due to Satsuma's staunchness alone that the government was able to quell the disturbances in Kumamoto and Choshu that broke out in 1876.<sup>104</sup>

While diplomats noted that the immediate cause of the rebellion was the government's attempt in early 1877 to remove arms and munitions from an arsenal at Kagoshima,<sup>105</sup> the rebellion in Satsuma, like the previous samurai uprisings, was also seen as a result of government measures to end the feudal privileges of samurai. Other much less obvious factors though, were pointed to by British diplomats. Parkes, for instance, commented that the samurai in Satsuma had also protested against the transfer to Russia of the Japanese portion of Sakhalin,<sup>106</sup> while Satow maintained that the suppression of the Hizen uprising by the government and the alleged ill-treatment of

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Flowers to Parkes, Nagasaki, November 3, 1876.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 176, November 13, 1876; *Ibid.*, November 25, 1876.

<sup>103</sup> FO 46/216, No. 25, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 19, 1877. On the Satsuma rebellion see Mounsey, A. H., *The Satsuma Rebellion: An Episode of Modern Japanese History* (London: John Murray), 1879.

<sup>104</sup> PRO 30/33/15/5, Satow's Diary, January 18, 1877.

<sup>105</sup> FO 46/216, No. 25, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 19, 1877.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Satsuma samurai during the Formosan expedition were also contributory factors. He explained that not only had the Hizen uprising created uneasy feeling, as 'considerable sympathy was felt for them in Satsuma,' but that the execution of Eto Shimpei, when the insurrection was put down, was also 'looked upon as an act of unnecessary severity, and great indignation was felt against Okubo, who had signed the warrant.' Furthermore, it was also alleged by Satsuma men that when some of their samurai who went to join the Formosan expedition had to be invalided on account of fever, they were sent to Nagasaki and there turned adrift, and had to find their own way home while still suffering from fever.<sup>107</sup> In view of his long-time contacts with Satsuma, Satow's observations merit the attention of historians.

As regards the suppression of the rebellion, Parkes showed a clear appreciation of the difficulty of the government's task. As he explained to Lord Derby following the dispatch of Admiral Ito from Hyogo to Kagoshima with a fleet of three vessels of war in February, not only were the samurai of the Satsuma military schools said to number about twenty thousand men, they were known to be well-armed and well-drilled, and appeared to be well provided with munitions of war. Furthermore, the batteries of Kagoshima were a protection against attack from sea, and, on the land side, their territory could only be approached by mountain passes, which they were already said to have occupied. Moreover, Parkes also showed concern about the effect which the example of the Satsuma samurai might have upon those of other parts of the country: '...if the revolt of Kagoshima should be followed by risings in other places, the energies and resources of the Government will be severely tried.'<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the rebellion was now headed by such an able military commander as Saigo, who was assisted by Kirino Toshiaki and Shinohara Kunimoto, both of whom were former commanders of the Imperial Guard, led Parkes to warn their presence 'adds considerable gravity to the insurrection, and will create a considerable sensation throughout the country.'<sup>109</sup> Parkes's anticipation of the potential spread of the rebellion was partly justified: both Terajima and Iwakura in the following few months informed Satow that considerable number of *shizoku* from neighbouring areas had joined the Saigo party.<sup>110</sup> In April, Parkes himself received a report that two other outbreaks had occurred at Fukuoka and Nakatsu in the north of Kyushu, which, in his view, showed that the Satsuma rebels had active

<sup>107</sup> Satow's memorandum, March 9, 1877 encl. in FO 46/217, No. 40, Parkes to Derby, March 12, 1877.

<sup>108</sup> FO 46/216, No. 25, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 19, 1877.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 32, February 27, 1877.

<sup>110</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, March 29, 1877; *Ibid.*, April 15, 1877.

sympathizers in other places in their vicinity.<sup>111</sup> The impact of the Satsuma rebellion was also felt in Tosa where, Parkes maintained, it was owing to the influence of ex-Councillor, Itagaki, and others that the agitators in that quarter were kept under restraint, and their action eventually took the form of memorials to the government.<sup>112</sup>

Apart from the spread of samurai discontent, the difficulty of the government was also seen as resulting from the ineffectiveness of the conscripted army against insurgent samurai. Diplomats noted that the new troops of the regular army, who had been trained to the rifle and bayonet, were commonly reported to be unequally matched with the Satsuma samurai when the latter rushed upon them with their swords. This was admitted to Parkes by Japanese Foreign Minister Terajima, who added that consequently the government was forced to order the drafting of a large number of samurai under the name of police, and that the old guard of the Mikado, formed shortly after the revolution from the samurai of the three leading clans of that period, but disbanded on the formation of the new army, had also been appealed to, and those belonging to Satsuma's old rival, Choshu, had already been called out.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, while the large enrollment of samurai was necessary to defeat the insurgents in Satsuma, diplomats warned that such an undertaking was not without potential danger to the government. To Satow, it was 'a dangerous sign.'<sup>114</sup> A similar view was expressed by Parkes in April:

Thus the Government are reviving the very class which they have been diligently endeavouring during the last six years to destroy, and, in trying to avoid one danger, are incurring another. Even if these Samurai should prove loyal to the Government, the latter will have to account with them after the present rebellion shall have been put down, but it is doubtful how far their loyalty may be relied on, even for the particular purpose for which they are now engaged. The temptation to defection will be strong, and many of them will lend, doubtless, their swords to that side which offers them the most attraction.<sup>115</sup>

Support for this view came from Satow, who stated that it was already reported that one body of five hundred samurai recently raised at Kokura in Kyushu had disbanded and disappeared, probably to join the insurgents or to riot on their own account. It is worthy of note that a few Meiji leaders also shared the diplomats' view. Iwakura for instance,

<sup>111</sup> FO 46/217, No. 56, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 12, 1877.

<sup>112</sup> FO 46/218, No. 83, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 5, 1877; FO 46/220, No. 125, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, August 30, 1877.

<sup>113</sup> FO 46/217, No. 56, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 12, 1877; PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, March 19, 1877; *Ibid.*, April 11, 1877.

<sup>114</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, March 19, 1877.

<sup>115</sup> FO 46/217, No. 56, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 12, 1877.

expressed his wariness to Satow that the *shizoku* who had fought the battles of the government might wish to revert to the privilege of wearing swords.<sup>116</sup>

Interestingly, a few Japanese, though from the outer circle of the government, were noted to have sought British mediation in bringing the crisis to an end. On June 13, a Japanese named Miyamoto requested Satow to urge Parkes to persuade the Mikado's government to come to terms with Satsuma on account of his having resided so long in the country and being known to have given much help of various sorts to the Mikado's administration on previous occasions.<sup>117</sup> In another instance, a Japanese named Kambara Seiji came to Satow suggesting the dispatch of the legation doctor, William Willis, to meet and encourage Saigo to surrender. Satow, however, rejected both requests, as he considered that any intervention or mediation should best involve Japanese themselves instead of foreigners. Satow himself approached Katsu Awa in July but only met with the latter's refusal on the grounds that he despised Okubo and refused 'to be used as a coolie to carry Okubo's messages' and also feared that such an undertaking, which might be seen as a sign of sympathy for Saigo, would endanger his own life. Similarly, when Kambara Seiji later put forward a new plan of getting ex-Shogun Keiki, Shimazu Hisamitsu and Itagaki to work for a reconciliation, Satow pointed out its impracticability, since he suspected that neither of them would dare to open their mouths for fear of being accused of as symphatizers of the Satsuma's cause.<sup>118</sup>

By August, it was clear that the government had gained the upper hand in the fighting against Satsuma and it finally ended in September with the death of Saigo by *harakiri*. The result was welcomed by British diplomats though Parkes noted that the event had only resulted in the impoverishment of the treasury and the loss of human life. The same point was made by the Japanese Foreign Minister, who admitted to Parkes that the total number of troops killed and wounded up to the June 30th alone was a third of the standing army of the country, while the cost of suppressing the rebellion amounted to thirty-five million yen, or considerably more than half the annual revenue of the country.<sup>119</sup>

## **Conclusion**

There were mixed responses by British diplomats to the dismantling of feudalism

<sup>116</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, April 15, 1877.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, June 13, 1877.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, July 13 and 17, 1877.

<sup>119</sup> FO 46/220, No. 138, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 28, 1877.

in Japan. Adams, for instance, was somewhat concerned about the possible repercussions of abolition of the *han*, arguing it could not be carried out without incurring bloodshed. In contrast, Parkes and Watson anticipated a better state of things and a stronger government in Japan. Similarly, diplomats in general welcomed both the conscription system, introduced to end the traditional samurai monopoly of military service, and the prohibition of sword-wearing by the samurai. Even so, some of them were critical of the commutation of stipends, which they saw as insufficient and unjust to the samurai. A few diplomats also considered the incessant issuance of laws and regulations by the government on social and economic matters as hasty and ill-considered, and maintained that a more careful approach should be adopted by the Meiji administration. During the various peasant and samurai uprisings, diplomats' evaluations of the gravity of the events and of the power of the government also varied from one insurrection to another, and a variety of reasons for their occurrence were offered by the diplomats.

Some diplomatic comments merit attention because they contain new information and interesting insights. Significant examples include the details of discrepancies in Japan's finances in 1873, the active and influential role of Shimazu as an opponent of the modernising government, Satow and Adams's concurrence in Iwakura's view that Japan was going too fast with domestic reforms, the apprehension of some Meiji leaders about the consequences of the abolition of feudalism, Parkes and Quin's sympathy with the samurai class following the commutation of stipends, Iwakura's acknowledgement of the inferior state of Japan compared to the West as well as Okuma and Iwakura's statements of how ill-prepared was Japan in the 1870s for a representative government. In addition, diplomats also made some suggestive observations in respect of the peasant and samurai uprisings by, for instance, pointing to the role played by former Aizu retainers in inciting peasants against the government, the connection between the Hizen uprising and Formosan expedition and Satsuma discontent, and the desire of some Japanese in seeking British mediation to effect a reconciliation between the central government and discontented Satsuma samurai.

Nevertheless, some aspects received shallow treatment in diplomatic reports, in particular the problem of *han* rivalry and the struggle for power among different ministries of the government, notably between the Home and Finance Ministry in 1873, which resulted in the resignation of Inoue and Shibusawa. Similarly, although diplomats noted the personal ambitions of some Meiji leaders for higher positions during the Korean question, they showed no awareness of the hostility towards Sat-Cho dominance among some of the ex-*Sangi*. Furthermore, diplomats also displayed only a limited



understanding of the early People's Rights movement since they made no mention of the 1874 memorial and of such significant political associations as the *Aikokukōtō* and *Aikokusha*. Although diplomats did report on the Osaka Conference in 1875, they lacked information on either the views and manoeuvres of participating Japanese politicians, such as Itagaki, Okubo and Kido, or the ensuing debates over the implementation of the reforms which had been agreed in Osaka. Nor did the diplomats analyse the issues raised by the People's Rights movement, such as the question of the power of the *Genrō-in*, the idea of representative government among members of the Local Assembly, and the government responses to these demands.

One further deficiency in British diplomatic reports is the virtual absence of evaluations of the longer-run consequences of some important events and developments. Little attention, for instance, was paid to the modernising impact on Japan of the Iwakura mission or to the concentration of power into the hands of Satsuma and Choshu politicians as a result of the 1873 crisis over Korea. As to the results of the Satsuma rebellion, apart from limited comment on the financial costs inflicted on the country and the loss of human life, no consideration was given to the benefits acquired by the Meiji government, such as the smooth execution of further modern reforms, and the increased confidence, among both the Japanese people and the Foreign Powers, in the ability of the government to deal with hostile forces at home. Moreover, when discussing the peasant uprisings, British diplomats revealed very little awareness of the relevance of the reorganization of local government following the dismantling of the old *han*, including the reshaping of feudal administrative boundaries and the appointment of new governors and high-level local officials to ensure the execution of central government policy.

The limited understanding or awareness of diplomats on these issues was partly due to the inability of the diplomats to gain access to information, especially on differences of views within the government. This may be seen in Plunkett's complaint about the reluctance of Meiji leaders to disclose the details of the Osaka Conference despite persistent attempts by foreign representatives to persuade them to do so. Perhaps it may be argued that diplomats' own contacts were too limited; and it may also have been the case that their overriding interest in Japan's foreign policy played a part in leading them to pay relatively little attention to the disagreements that were taking place in the Japanese government.

On the dismantling of feudalism in Japan, many diplomatic comments show little or no evidence of 'Orientalist' thinking. Perhaps the most outstanding of these was Watson's overwhelmingly positive view of the effects of the abolition of feudalism in

Japan. On the other hand, some diplomatic comments fit 'Orientalist' interpretations, among them Plunkett's criticisms of the *Genrō-in* and *Daishin-in*, Parkes's similarly dismissive view of the *Genrō-in*, and Adams's skepticism following the abolition of *han* in 1871. Nevertheless, none of the diplomats can be said to have been 'Orientalist' in the sense of failing to acknowledge Japan's capacity for progress. Parkes, for instance, did not deny Japan's ability to implement a modern political system, while Plunkett generally regarded the political reforms adopted by the Meiji government in subsequent years as worthy of commendation. Adams, too, in pointing out the need both for choosing such influential individuals such as Kido and Okubo as ambassadors and for careful study of Western systems by the members of Iwakura embassy during their tour in Europe and the United States, indicated his expectation that Japan was capable of progressive modern reforms. It is unlikely that similar views were being expressed by British diplomats in other Asian countries at this time.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**BRITISH DIPLOMATS' PERCEPTIONS OF JAPANESE**  
**POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, 1878-90**

Having withstood the most serious challenge to its power in the form of samurai and peasant uprisings during the crucial period of 1871-77, the Meiji government proceeded to modernise its political system by effecting far-reaching institutional and structural changes. The phase was finally completed in 1890 with the inauguration of an Imperial Diet. The modernising process naturally attracted British diplomatic attention, but the issues on which they commented most were not always those which historians have regarded as most important. In particular they reported more frequently on the influence of factionalism within the Meiji government than they did on the establishment of the 1889 Constitution.

**The People's Rights Movement**

One prominent feature of a modern nation was a representative or parliamentary system. In Japan, while government leaders admitted the necessity of such a system to create a modern country,<sup>1</sup> the loudest demand for its establishment was voiced by the People's Rights (*Jiyū minken*) movement, which opposed the authoritarian tendency of the Meiji government and its domination by officials from a few south-western provinces, particularly Satsuma and Choshu.

British diplomats showed little sympathy for the *Jiyū minken* movement's aspiration for representative government, since they generally viewed Japan as being not yet ready to adopt and implement a representative system. One reason was the presumed ignorance of the Japanese public in matters of modern politics. This was evident in Parkes's dispatch to Lord Salisbury in 1878 following the murder of Okubo Toshimichi, in which Parkes observed that 'the creation of constitutional checks among a people who have hitherto been entirely ignorant of them is a work of time and education.' Furthermore, the government's promise in the Charter Oath of 1868 to establish a representative system, he maintained, had been made without proper foresight:

...although the present Government on coming into power put into the Mikado's mouth the promise that a Deliberative Assembly should be formed and that all measures for the Government of the country should be decided by public opinion, they committed themselves

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Uyehara, G. E., *The Political Development of Japan 1867-1909*, (London: Constable & Co. Ltd.), 1910, p. 110.

without due deliberation to too comprehensive a measure - the extent of which they themselves probably did not see at the time and which they soon found impossible to carry into effect.<sup>2</sup>

The above statements may appear to be inconsistent with Parkes's pre-1868 advocacy of political reform as attested to by his remarks in 1867 that the Shogun should rule constitutionally by admitting *daimyo* to have some voice in the administration of the country.<sup>3</sup> At that time he also maintained that the Japanese assembly would protect the country not only 'against the despotism of a faction of its nobles,' referring to the anti-Shogun party (Satsuma, Tosa, Echizen and Uwajima), but also against 'the exclusive bureaucracy' which the Shogun had hitherto used to assume general control.<sup>4</sup> Why did Parkes cease to be an advocate of constitutional reform? The answer may be that Parkes equated the proposed Japanese assembly in 1867 with the baronial council from which the English parliament had evolved in medieval times, thus implying that Japan needed to follow a similar path of gradual evolution rather than leap ahead to the instant adoption of a modern representative system. This view is more or less confirmed by his critical observation that the proposed idea of a second chamber (for the samurai representatives or *kerai* of the *daimyo*) of the council should not be rushed into as the *kerai* would 'make themselves ridiculous,' while the idea of universal suffrage, he wrote, 'will amuse Lord Stanley' adding that 'They [the *daimyo*] probably scarcely yet know what they propose to undertake.'<sup>5</sup> His conclusion in 1867 was that 'The contemplated changes are too vast to be speedily accomplished & it is to be hoped that all parties will agree to seeing them worked out gradually but thoroughly.'<sup>6</sup>

Although from a different angle, Chargé d'Affaires J. G. Kennedy and Legation secretary John Gubbins also implied that the demand for a national assembly was premature. For instance, Kennedy reported in 1880 that 'It is very possible that if a plebiscite could be taken, a large majority of the people would be found either ignorant of, or indifferent to, the advantages of popular Government.'<sup>7</sup> Gubbins argued that even though the *Jiyū minken* movement could claim to have a large number of supporters throughout the country, it was comprised chiefly of members of the samurai class, who absorbed democratic principles as uttered by political demagogues without any real understanding of them, and who mostly had economic grievances. The people's views on

<sup>2</sup> FO 46/230, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, June 6, 1878.

<sup>3</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, October 31, 1866; *ibid.*, Osaka, May 6, 1867.

<sup>4</sup> FO 46/83, No. 205, Parkes to Stanley, Yedo, December 5, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yedo, November 28, 1867.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, December 16, 1867.

<sup>7</sup> FO 46/256, Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, March 8, 1880.

the principles of parliamentarism and people's rights were, in Gubbins's words, 'crude and ill-formed.'<sup>8</sup>

As to the origin of their views, one may argue that British diplomats were influenced by 'Orientalism'. Yet, rather than seeing Japan as backward and incapable of following in the West's footsteps, which would be a more clear-cut example of 'Orientalism', the diplomats can be seen to have perceived Japan as capable, in time, of establishing representative government. This can be seen in the previous suggestion by Parkes that a medieval European system was more suitable for Japan. Nevertheless, other factors also might have influenced British diplomats, one being the failure of Japan's first representative assembly, the *Kōgisho*, which was established in 1869.<sup>9</sup> Even at its outset, Parkes critically noted the lack of enthusiasm shown by the *Kōgisho* members, particularly the *daimyo* 'who in most cases have had but slight experience of the earnest business of life were not eager to devote themselves to the labours of an onerous and voluntary office.'<sup>10</sup> Kennedy's later criticism, on the other hand, attributed the failure of the assembly to its strong conservative tendency since, as he saw it, the opposition of its members to the progressive policy of the government led to its abandonment by the latter:

An attempt was made, to give effect to the idea thus started, as early as 1869, but owing to the constitution of the first assemblies (which, in no degree representative, consisted solely of "samurai" nominated by the different clans) each in its turn endeavoured to hamper the progressive policy of the Government; and they were consequently dissolved after a brief existence. It would evidently have been impossible to carry out the various reforms needed, in the face of a parliament in which the "samurai" alone would have had a voice, whilst the political education of the people continued to remain in an undeveloped condition.<sup>11</sup>

More importantly, it is also probable that the views expressed by Japanese statesmen contributed to the British diplomats' pessimism. While admitting that it was the government's intention to adopt the modern representative system, Japanese leaders generally held that the country was not yet prepared, as the people had no real knowledge or experience of how the system worked. As early as 1872, Okuma Shigenobu expressed to Chargé d'Affaires R. G. Watson the view that it would be a long time before education could spread throughout Japan so 'as to make it safe to entrust the people with the power

<sup>8</sup> Gubbins's memorandum of November 7, 1884, encl. in FO 46/316, No. 215, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 18, 1884.

<sup>9</sup> The assembly of *Kōgisho* was renamed *Shugi-in* in August 1869. It was abandoned in 1870 and finally abolished in 1871.

<sup>10</sup> FO 46/108, No. 86, Parkes to Clarendon, Yokohama, April 13, 1869.

<sup>11</sup> FO 46/273, Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, October 17, 1881.

of electing representatives who should have a share in governing the country.'<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in April 1875, Parkes was informed by Iwakura Tomomi that the demand for a parliament could not yet be granted because Japan was not prepared, and that the appropriate course of action was to establish prefectural and district assemblies.<sup>13</sup> The same sentiment was expressed by Ito Hirobumi, then Minister of the Interior, in a conversation with Kennedy in March 1880. Ito said that the demand 'was premature, that representative Government even in the smallest degree had been unknown in the history of Japan, and that the Government had decided to resist for the present this desire of the people to share in the conduct of public business for which they had not yet shown any capacity.'<sup>14</sup> It is also significant that among Parkes's private letters, there is a copy marked in pencil by Parkes of an 1883 pamphlet written by Yoshida Kiyonari, then Japanese Minister at Washington, and entitled 'The Proposed National Assembly in Japan', which may well have strengthened Parkes's perception of how ill-equipped Japan was for parliamentary government. In it Yoshida wrote:

When her people show that they have gone to the fountain-head of knowledge by manifesting even the slightest evidence of originality of thought and investigation in the wide field of literature, there will be proof of the fact that the spirit is abroad which leads to political advancement. Until then, and so long as Japan continues so far behind the rest of the world in literary performance, there is a fair argument by analogy that her political condition is not much further advanced.<sup>15</sup>

Another Japanese leader, Inoue Kaoru, described the large number of politicians outside the government, in a conversation with Chargé d'Affaires Le Poer Trench in April 1883, as 'a lot of new and...ignorant mushroom politicians.'<sup>16</sup> If the politicians were ignorant of real politics, what more could be expected from the large masses of Japan? Another probable reason, though difficult to substantiate, was that perhaps, British diplomats did not favour democracy in principle. Despite their modern or Western background, it is possible that they preferred a government ruled by a better class of the society.

Until the people were educated and able to share the burden of administration, Japan, in the British diplomats' view, had to adopt a gradual approach towards a representative administration. According to Parkes's report of June 1878 to Lord Salisbury, constitutional checks in Japan required time, and the appropriate course for

<sup>12</sup> FO 46/156, No. 146, Watson to Granville, Yedo, November 11, 1872.

<sup>13</sup> FO 46/191, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 13, 1875.

<sup>14</sup> FO 46/256, Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, March 8, 1880.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Dickins, F. V. and Lane-Poole, S., *The Life of Sir Harry Parkes*, Vol. II (London: Macmillan & Co.), 1894, pp. 315-16.

<sup>16</sup> FO 46/380, No. 37, Conf., Trench to Salisbury, April 28, 1883.

Japan, amidst the popular cry for representative government, was to gradually enlarge the basis of the administration.<sup>17</sup> In another instance, on being asked by Basil Hall Chamberlain what would be the future of Japan, 'Japan?' said Parkes, 'Japan will be a South American Republic.'<sup>18</sup> The remark implies that though Japan could become a more politically advanced state, it would take a long time before she could imitate the achievements of the West. Kennedy also believed in a gradual concession to the public demand, though his concern was the stability of the country amidst the rise of agitation by the *Jiyū minken* movement. In view of the general discontent in the country, he perceived in 1880 that 'it would be hazardous for the Government to refuse to make any concession in the direction demanded.'<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that the diplomats' views were similar to those of the Meiji leaders who also maintained that the government should take gradual steps towards the establishment of a parliament.<sup>20</sup>

An additional factor which may have affected the way in which British diplomats perceived the Japanese democratic movement was Japan's attempt to revise its unequal treaties. After its first tentative approaches to discuss this issue with foreign representatives in 1871, Japan relentlessly pursued its aim of treaty revision in the 1880s. British diplomats generally observed that the introduction into Japan of a representative government while the negotiations for treaty revision were in progress would only create complications and difficulties. A Japanese parliament that consisted of opposition parties, in the diplomats' view, was likely to be more hostile and difficult to deal with in negotiating points for new treaties, as the parties were generally critical of the government's proposals for treaty revision. Even without the problem emanating from the Diet, British diplomats had found Japan's proposals, particularly with regard to the questions of extra-territoriality and consular jurisdiction for foreigners, difficult to accept, especially in the absence of a modern and perfect Japanese legal system. Parkes's reservations about them are illustrated in his farewell speech to foreign residents at Yokohama in August 1883:

But when the changes which have been so rapidly initiated affected the position and interests of foreigners in Japan, I then maintained, as it was both my right and my duty to do, that they should be proceeded

<sup>17</sup> FO 46/230, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, June 6, 1878.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Dickins and Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 395. The conversation between Chamberlain and Parkes took place during the former's visit to Japan in the 1870s.

<sup>19</sup> FO 46/256, Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, March 8, 1880.

<sup>20</sup> Beckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50; Joseph Pittau, S. J., *Political Thought in Early Meiji Japan 1868-1889*, (Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press), 1967, p. 50.

with deliberately, and that each step should be based upon mature reflection.<sup>21</sup>

Similar reservations were spelled out even more clearly by Gubbins in a memorandum of January 1890:

It would be therefore idle to suppose that the Japanese Parliament when it meets, will not at once endeavour to grapple with Treaty Revision, should it still remain unsettled. And when the ignorant and reckless views of the majority of the members of that Parliament, drawn as they will be chiefly from the ranks of the Radical and Progressist parties, are considered, it is not easy to foresee [sic] a limit to the lengths to which national excitement working through Parliamentary channels may carry the Government.<sup>22</sup>

As the negotiations for treaty revision entered the late 1880s, a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration prevailed among British diplomats. Not only did the negotiations often reach deadlock, but the Japanese increasingly opposed concessions to Foreign Powers. Against this background, it is possible that British diplomats' irritation towards the Japanese in regard to treaty revision, also contributed to their critical views on Japanese politics in general. Plunkett, for instance, perceived in March 1887 that the aggressive tone of Japan in negotiating the treaty 'has been startling and one asks oneself whether she has not somehow amused herself into the illusion that she is a Seventh Great Power of Europe.'<sup>23</sup> In 1890, Hugh Fraser's dissatisfaction with a hostile article in a Japanese newspaper, the *Choya Shimbun*, led the British minister to express strong, albeit qualified, criticism of Japan:

...one can not rely very confidently upon the common sense of the Japanese. They are an attractive people on the whole, and have many good qualities; but they are eminently shortsighted, fierce, vain-glorious, and excitable, and there is always danger of their committing a "coup de tête," doing childish wrongs, or giving childish provocation, in serious affairs.<sup>24</sup>

Given their pessimistic views of parliamentarianism in Japan, it is no surprise that most diplomats showed no condemnatory attitude towards the autocratic character of the Meiji government, i.e. the Sat-Cho domination of political power. With the exception of Consul John C. Hall, who critically observed in 1884 that 'the favouritism of the present

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Dickins and Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, January 1890 in FO 46/398, No. 20, Very Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 25, 1890.

<sup>23</sup> FO 46/366, No. 60, Secret, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, March 8, 1887.

<sup>24</sup> FO 46/398, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 13, 1890. The article, which was published on January 9, 1890 advocated "Japan for Japanese" and claimed the superiority of Japan over other nations.



Government is probably as incurable as it is notorious,<sup>25</sup> diplomats appeared to take the view that the alleged Sat-Cho "monopoly" was somewhat exaggerated by *Jiyū minken* agitators. In a memorandum of February 1884, Gubbins observed that while the composition of the Cabinet (*Dajōkan*) was clearly marked by the dominance of Satsuma and Choshu (where of the twelve *Sangi*, five were natives of Satsuma and four of Choshu, while Tosa claimed two and Hizen one), yet, if one looked into the general official statistics of the country, 'outside the Cabinet the ascendancy complained of is not so marked as is generally assumed.'<sup>26</sup> Rather,

...the real foundation for the cry of "Satcho no Seifu" (A Satsuma and Choshu Government) lies in the fact of the predominance of Satsuma and Choshu men in the present Cabinet. The great power wielded by the members of the Cabinet, who are virtually in the position of irresponsible Ministers makes this predominance undoubtedly greater than it might otherwise be, and the practical significance of the situation is accentuated by the fact that the policy of the Government is virtually dictated by an inner circle in the Cabinet.<sup>27</sup>

Le Poer Trench's remark also justified the position of the Sat-Cho leaders, as he observed in March 1884 that in spite of the monopoly by the Sat-Cho faction, no favouritism was shown towards the particular provinces, namely Satsuma and Choshu:

It should however be distinctly understood that the days of Clan supremacy have passed and that the influence possessed by Ministers in the present Government is exercised little if at all in favor of their ex-clansmen or for local purposes, but almost solely in the interests of the conservative party which the Cabinet represents.<sup>28</sup>

One issue to consider, however, though it to some extent contradicts the previous argument that British diplomats approved of authoritarian rule, was that the government's concessions to the popular movement might have also contributed to the diplomats' acquiescence of the Sat-Cho *hanbatsu* rule. Among such concessions noted by British diplomats were the establishment of the *Genrō-in*, the Assembly of Governors

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum by Hall, Conf., November 5, 1884, in FO 46/316, No. 210, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, November 5, 1884.

<sup>26</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, February 26, 1884, "The Satsuma and Choshu Party in the Government," in FO 46/311, Trench to Granville, Tokyo, March 5, 1884. The official statistics on which Gubbins based his statement was the "*Kwan-in-roku*", or list of officials, which gives the names of all persons in government employ arranged in the order of the Public Departments and Prefectures, and the Provinces and Prefectures to which they belonged. From these statistics, Gubbins maintained that Satsuma and Choshu men together held only one third of the highest appointments in the government and only one ninth of the whole official class.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> FO 46/311, Trench to Granville, Tokyo, March 5, 1884.

(*Chihōkan-kaigi*), and elected assemblies in prefectures, cities, towns and villages.<sup>29</sup> While there was no diplomatic comment on the promulgation of the "Three Great Laws" of 1878, which among others brought about the establishment of a formal system of local assemblies, or on whether the composition of the assemblies reflected democratic principles of representation or whether their powers were constitutionally effective, Kennedy did note in a March 1880 report that the concessions had resulted in an increased demand for the creation of a national assembly, and he reported that a large number of *Jiyū minken* supporters, among whom were members of the local assemblies, had recently gathered in the capital and presented a petition calling for an elected legislative assembly.<sup>30</sup>

An even greater concession to popular demand was the issuance of an Imperial decree on October 11, 1881, announcing the establishment of the national assembly in 1890. On the same day, the government announced that the sale of the property of the Hokkaido Colonisation Department<sup>31</sup> would be abandoned, much to the delight of political agitators who had levelled the accusation that the sale by the government was a flagrant act of favouritism at the state's expense. These decrees, according to Kennedy, were proof of 'the progress and power of the people...[and] the recognition by the Government of the necessity of taking account of public opinion.'<sup>32</sup> In addition to popular pressure, Kennedy also rightly observed a connection between the concessions and the withdrawal of Okuma Shigenobu (Minister of Finance) from the government, though he did not explicitly suggest that the decrees were intended to counteract the effect of the resignation of Okuma, who was becoming increasingly associated with some sections of the People's Rights movement. Kennedy maintained that Okuma not only held more liberal views than the other Meiji leaders and advocated the establishment of popular government within two or three years, but that he also was directly involved in campaigning against the government's proposal to sell the Colonisation Department property to certain individuals connected with the Department.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, Kennedy overestimated the influence of the opposition movement when he anticipated that the

<sup>29</sup> For further details of the organization and powers of the assemblies see, e.g., McLaren, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-38, 141-47.

<sup>30</sup> FO 46/256, Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, March 8, 1880.

<sup>31</sup> See Uyehara, *op. cit.*, p. 86, Beckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>32</sup> FO 46/273, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, November 21, 1881. Twenty-seven different associations from twenty-four prefectures with the total members of 87,000 people were represented in the demonstration. The petition was presented to the government in the name of the "United Association for the Establishment of a National Assembly" (*Kokkai Kisei Domeikai*). Uyehara, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>33</sup> FO 46/273, Kennedy to Granville, Tokyo, November 23, 1881. See a slightly different view on Okuma's involvement in the campaign by Fraser, A., 'The Expulsion of Okuma from the Government in 1881, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI, 1966-67, pp. 225-226.

government might be pressurized by impatient politicians to establish the assembly sooner than 1890, as had been promised.<sup>34</sup>

Though political agitators did not seek an earlier date for the establishment of the parliament, the popular movement so increased its agitation that it gave rise to the birth of Japan's political parties. However, most diplomats referred to the development of the parties only at a later date, the earliest mention being by Ernest Satow in 1882.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, with the exception of the leading parties and societies, namely the *Aikokusha* or Patriotic Association (established in 1878) and the *Jiyūtō* or Liberty Party (1881) under the leadership of Itagaki Taisuke and the *Rikken Kaishintō* or Constitutional Progressive Party (1882) led by Okuma, nothing whatsoever was recorded about other groups such as the *Rikken Teiseitō* or Constitutional Imperial Party, a government-sponsored party established in March 1882.<sup>36</sup>

On the question of why the political parties had grown so rapidly, Gubbins dismissively asserted in 1884 and 1885 that the liberal parties consisted chiefly of young men of the samurai class who were either 'led by the sprinkling of modern learning they have obtained in the primary schools and minor colleges to...imbibe with avidity from the lips of radical demagogues high-sounding notions of liberty and the rights of men, which they are unable to assimilate,' or were discontented with their economic situation and 'barely able to live on the pittance they receive as pensions from the Government.'<sup>37</sup> While samurai involvement increased the number of party supporters, Gubbins observed that they were also dangerous and unamenable to party control. In illustrating his view, Gubbins pointed to the dissolution of the *Jiyūtō's* branch society in Osaka, and the disintegration of the *Jiyūtō* itself in October 1884. He explained that due to the extremist activities of some *Jiyūtō* members, the government had accused the party of providing a sanctuary for radical agitators responsible for the Ibaraki and Saitama riots that occurred in September 1884, and so, in order to avoid these charges, the *Jiyūtō's* leadership had dissolved the party.<sup>38</sup> It should be noted, however, that Gubbins's emphasis on samurai numerical domination may not have been justified, at least regarding the People's Rights

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, October 17, 1881.

<sup>35</sup> PRO 30/33/15/7, Satow's Diary, September 8, 1882.

<sup>36</sup> For further details on the parties, see e.g., Uyehara, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-93; Langdon, F., *Politics in Japan*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.), 1967, pp. 31-32; Sims, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 65, 69-71; Ike, N. 'Political Leadership and Political Parties', in Ward, R. E. and Rustow, D. A., *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 397-398.

<sup>37</sup> Gubbins's memorandum of November 7, 1884, encl. in FO 46/316, No. 215, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 18, 1884; Gubbins's memorandum of December 8, 1885, encl. in FO 46/335, No. 253, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 11, 1885.

<sup>38</sup> Gubbins's memorandum of November 7, 1884, encl. in FO 46/316, No. 215, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 18, 1884. Other causes for its dissolution, according to Gubbins, were the restrictive measures placed by the government in respect to public meetings and the press, and the lack of funds.

movement as a whole after 1880. This is because the composition of the *Jiyūtō* largely consisted of rural landlords and peasants, while the *Kaishintō* members included many urban intellectuals and wealthy merchants.<sup>39</sup>

In response to the *Jiyū minken* movement, the Meiji government employed repressive measures as well as concessions. British diplomats' attitudes to these measures were ambiguous or non-committal. One instance is Parkes's comment on the severe punishment of soldiers of the Imperial Guard who were involved in a mutiny in August 1878, which occurred because of both the influence of the *Jiyū minken* ideas and arrears in pay. Parkes observed that while the severity of the sentences demonstrated the government's confidence in its power, it might also be as harmful as misplaced clemency.<sup>40</sup> As to the government's subsequent measures to avoid similar incidents of political subversion in the army, namely the establishment of military police (*kempei*) in January 1881 and the issuance of the Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors (*Gunjin Chokuyu*) in January 1882, which prohibited the military from involvement in politics,<sup>41</sup> neither Parkes nor other diplomats made any observation. However, when a series of regulations were issued in April 1880 to curtail the right to form political societies and to hold public discussion of political subjects, Kennedy observed that the government's reasons for enacting the regulations could not be easily justified as there were no reports in the press to support Inoue's claims. In his view, the real motive of the government was to suppress the political society, the *Aikokusha*, which was becoming increasingly popular at that time.<sup>42</sup> As to other counter-measures by the government, such as the press law issued in 1883 and revised in 1888,<sup>43</sup> and the Peace Preservation Ordinance of 1887, which further strengthened the power of the police in monitoring political parties, there was a notable absence of condemnation from British diplomats.<sup>44</sup> One may argue that this further confirms their unsympathetic tendencies towards the *Jiyū minken* movement and its aspiration for representative government.

<sup>39</sup> See the parties' membership in Beckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62; Beasley, W.G., 'Meiji Political Institutions,' in Jansen, *op. cit.*, p. 659; Lebra, J., 'The Kaishinto as a Political Elite', in Silberman, B. S. and Harootunian, H. D. (eds), *Modern Japanese Leadership: Transition and Change*, (Tucson, Arizona: Univ. of Arizona Press), 1966, pp. 377-378.

<sup>40</sup> FO 46/230, No. 110, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, October 25, 1878.

<sup>41</sup> Tsuzuki, C., *The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan 1825-1995*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), 2000, p. 107.

<sup>42</sup> FO 46/256, Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, April 30, 1880. The reasons as claimed by Inoue Kaoru to Kennedy were that the agitators had been 'delivering lectures of an inflammatory character in the rural districts, and obtaining money from ignorant peasants by promising to relieve them from the oppression of the Government, and particularly from the conscription which is extremely unpopular' and trying 'to instil into the mind of the farming class that the land tax levied from them is unjustifiably high, and ought to be greatly reduced.'

<sup>43</sup> FO 46/379, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 24, 1888.

<sup>44</sup> FO 46/369, No. 252, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 28, 1887.

After a brief decline in the mid-1880s, the *Jiyū minken* movement again revived in 1887 following Foreign Minister Inoue's failure to revise the unequal treaties. This was noted by British diplomats who reported on the increasingly hostile criticisms, the presentation of numerous memorials to the government from various parts of the country, the formation of political clubs and societies, and the increase in the frequency of political meetings.<sup>45</sup> On this growing political movement, one trend that Le Poer Trench noted as 'not unnatural' in Japan was the shift in criticism from the question of foreign policy or treaty revision to the government's domestic policy. This was demonstrated, according to Le Poer Trench, first by Itagaki's 1887 memorial, in which the opposition leader protested against the over-centralization by the government and heavy taxation, and complained of the relative strengths of the army and navy to each other, and of the creation of the new nobility,<sup>46</sup> and second by the movement under Goto Shojiro that criticised the government for its extravagant expenditure and the large increase in recent years in the number of paid officials and of hired German workers while poverty was widespread in Tosa.<sup>47</sup>

As opposition mounted, Le Poer Trench and Gubbins noted that the government was forced to issue the Peace Preservation Ordinance on December 25, 1887, which reinforced the power of the police in suppressing secret societies and political associations.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the agitation continued as proposals for treaty revision under new Foreign Minister Okuma were also rejected as undermining Japan's honour and sovereignty. In view of the heightened opposition, Fraser cautioned in August 1889 that the agitation might take an acute and dangerous form at any moment and lead to political assassination of individual statesmen.<sup>49</sup> His apprehension soon proved to be correct as some extremists made an attempt on Okuma's life. The severely injured Okuma tendered his resignation and the government suspended the negotiations for treaty revision,<sup>50</sup> and it was not until 1894 that the unequal treaties were finally ended.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 238, Conf., Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, October 8, 1887. See also memorandum by Gubbins of October 4, 1887, in *ibid.*, No. 246, Conf., November 18, 1887.

<sup>46</sup> FO 46/369, No. 246, Conf., Trench to Salisbury, November 18, 1887. See the enclosed memorandum by Gubbins of November 12, 1887 for further details of the complaints put forward by Itagaki.

<sup>47</sup> FO 46/379, No. 4, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 5, 1888, see the enclosed memorandum by Gubbins of December 28, 1887. Also see FO 46/369, No. 252, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 28, 1887.

<sup>48</sup> FO 46/369, No. 252, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 28, 1887; FO 46/379, No. 4, Trench to Salisbury, January 5, 1888, see memorandum by Gubbins, December 28, 1887. For details on other government measures that undermined the *Jiyū minken* movement see, e.g., Sims, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-77.

<sup>49</sup> FO 46/387, No. 97, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 16, 1889.

<sup>50</sup> FO 46/397, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, October 21, 1889.

## Structural Reforms

Apart from the popular demands for a modern representative system, 1878-90 also saw some modernising changes in the government machinery. In December 1885, a Cabinet based on a Western model was established to replace the *Dajōkan* system. The offices of *Dajō Daijin* (Chancellor of the Empire), *Sadaijin* (Minister of the Left), and *Udaijin* (Minister of the Right) were abolished, and nine departments instead of eight constituted the new Cabinet with Ito as Prime Minister. British diplomats, particularly Plunkett, favoured the changes and viewed them as signs of progress because they strengthened the government's effectiveness and replaced 'the complicated administrative machinery' of Japan.<sup>51</sup> But more importantly, the change was favoured because it was seen as 'Western' and was carried out by 'progressive' politicians who had political knowledge of the West. Plunkett, for instance, evidently saw it in this light when he described the establishment of the Cabinet as an 'important episode in the constitutional development of Japan'<sup>52</sup> and when he argued that foreigners should render their support to the new Cabinet due to its 'progressive' tendency: 'the Cabinet is certainly one of progress, and it is in my opinion in the interest of all Foreigners that it should be supported and encouraged, in order that it may steer safely through the many difficulties which Japan has still to overcome.'<sup>53</sup> In another instance, Plunkett again pointed out the 'progressive' composition of the Cabinet when he observed in February 1886 that with the exception of one minister (Tani Kanjo, Minister of Agriculture and Commerce), all Cabinet members had either visited or stayed for some time in Europe or America, thus acquiring some advanced knowledge of the West.<sup>54</sup> Gubbins also commented favourably on the 'progressive' make-up of the new Cabinet. Compared to the previous system, which reserved a number of high posts for Old Court Nobility, the new Cabinet, according to Gubbins, consisted solely of 'new school politicians' whose liberal tendency was opposed to the conservatism of the Old Court Party.<sup>55</sup>

Following the establishment of the new Cabinet, various administrative changes, most of which were initiated by Ito, were carried out in order to restructure Japan's political system. In addition to a retrenchment programme, other changes, as reported by Plunkett, included the new importance attached to the issuing of decrees as direct

<sup>51</sup> FO 46/335, No. 17, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 28, 1885.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 16, December 28, 1885.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 17, November 28, 1885.

<sup>54</sup> FO 46/343, No. 15, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 1, 1886.

<sup>55</sup> Gubbins's memorandum of December 28, 1885, encl. in FO 46/335, No. 16, Tokyo, December 28, 1885.

imperial edicts (previously, the decrees were published in the name of the *Dajō Daijin*), the adoption of a new title for Ito, namely *Sōri Daijin* (Minister President of State or Prime Minister), the reconstruction of the organization of the diplomatic and consular services of Japan,<sup>56</sup> and the creation of the office of *Naidaijin* (Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal). To Plunkett, the reforms in general were 'extensive' and 'radical'<sup>57</sup> and 'amount to a Revolution,' but they were still far from complete.<sup>58</sup> Though the reforms have not been so regarded by historians, Plunkett's conclusion may have stemmed from the fact that, as he reported to Lord Rosebury in March 1886, important notifications altering some portion or other of the administrative organization of the country were published almost daily in the Japanese official gazette. Moreover, as he perceived it, there existed secret criticisms within Japan against the sweeping nature of Ito's reforms.<sup>59</sup> Although he did not elaborate on the latter point, it is probable that one source of criticism concerned Ito's retrenchment policy, for there were different views within the government as to the manner in which the programme should be carried out.<sup>60</sup>

Given his view of the 'extensive' nature of the reforms, it was not surprising that Plunkett at first had some reservations regarding their successful execution. In December 1885 Plunkett noted that while the changes established a direct relationship between the Cabinet and the Emperor (through the abolition of *Dajō Daijin*, *Sadaijin* and *Udaijin*, which had previously formed a barrier between the government and the Mikado) and bestowed power and independent responsibility upon Cabinet Ministers, the efficiency of the new arrangement had yet to be proved.<sup>61</sup> On the retrenchment programme, which involved the reduction of government officials on a massive scale, Plunkett observed that while the authority and influence which Ito possessed as Prime Minister and at the same time President of the Legislative Bureau<sup>62</sup> would facilitate the execution of the reform, still 'it remains to be seen how far the government will be able to carry this out, without raising an amount of discontent.'<sup>63</sup>

By April 1886, though Plunkett was still cautious, his statements were more positive, as no counter-productive effects of the reforms were apparent. He expressed the hope that though the changes were still incomplete and it was still too soon to rule out the

<sup>56</sup> Japanese diplomatic officials were divided into three main classes, *Chokunin*, *Sonin* and *Hannin*, and all three classes were further divided into a number of categories.

<sup>57</sup> FO 46/344, No. 50, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 31, 1886.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 52, April 5, 1886.

<sup>59</sup> FO 46/344, No. 50, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 31, 1886.

<sup>60</sup> FO 46/368, No. 207, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 30, 1887.

<sup>61</sup> FO 46/335, No. 16, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 28, 1885.

<sup>62</sup> The Bureau was created in 1884 for the purpose of studying and drafting the Constitution and supervising government departments.

<sup>63</sup> FO 46/335, No. 17, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 28, 1885.

possibility of some discontent, 'the prudence and energy which have marked Count Ito's proceedings since he assumed the Office of Minister President of State will not now desert him, and that His Excellency may thus finally succeed in the tremendous task he has now fairly undertaken of converting an Oriental autocratic administration into one based on European Constitutional principle.'<sup>64</sup> In December 1886, reflecting on the reforms, Plunkett further praised the peaceful transformation of Japan's political systems: 'Everything passed off then so calmly that it must be difficult in Europe to realize exactly how great really was the change, and how enormous was the step thus gained towards the more complete Europeanization of Japan.'<sup>65</sup>

In 1888, the Privy Council (*Sumitsu-in*), also based on a Western model, was established as the supreme advisory body to the Emperor. It is worthy of note that while Le Poer Trench himself noted that there existed two contradictory views in Japan; firstly, that the new Privy Council was meant to hold a weak or merely ornamental position in the machinery of government, and secondly, that the council's task was to deliberate on the new Constitution,<sup>66</sup> - a view relatively close to that held by some later historians<sup>67</sup> - Le Poer Trench, however, emphasized that the council was more a result of the rivalry between the Satsuma and Choshu factions in the government. In May 1888, following a struggle for power between the two factions, Ito, who was from Choshu, resigned his office as Prime Minister. In his place, Kuroda Kiyotaka of Satsuma was appointed. This, to Le Poer Trench, marked the ascendancy of the Satsuma party and the defeat of its rival, and the establishment of the Privy Council was mainly to be understood in this context. As he put it in May 1888: 'The creation of the new Privy Council is, I am of opinion, due more to a desire to conceal the real reason of Count Ito's retirement than to any recognized necessity for administrative reorganization.'<sup>68</sup> In marked contrast, a month later he saw it as resembling a political institution in England. As the Japanese council was engaged in considering the draft of the new Constitution, he observed that it 'is assuming a character of great importance, and may already be regarded as the nucleus of a House of Lords.'<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> FO 46/344, No. 52, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, April 5, 1886.

<sup>65</sup> FO 46/349, Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, December 21, 1886.

<sup>66</sup> FO 46/380, No. 39, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 7, 1888.

<sup>67</sup> Beasley, 'Meiji Political Institutions', in Jansen, *op. cit.*, p. 663; Akita, G., *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan 1868-1900*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press), 1967, p. 64; Uyehara, *op. cit.*, p. 105. These historians maintain that the Privy Council was purposely created to deliberate on the draft Constitution and Ito's resignation was a voluntary move so that he might preside over the undertaking that was entrusted to the council.

<sup>68</sup> FO 46/380, No. 39, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 9, 1888.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 45, June 7, 1888.



### The Meiji Constitution

The most important political reform after 1878 was the Meiji Constitution. Having already been promised by an Imperial decree in 1881, the Constitution was promulgated in February 1889, and in 1890 the Japanese Parliament or Diet was established, thus inaugurating an epoch-making political experiment. Nevertheless, British diplomats devoted surprisingly little attention to the Meiji Constitution.

One feature of the Meiji Constitution that British diplomats did note was the marked influence of Germany.<sup>70</sup> Following Ito's return from a tour in Europe where he studied the constitutions of different Western nations, Gubbins wrote in early 1884: 'It is...an open secret that the constitution of the Parliament to be established in 1890 is to be founded on the model of that of the German Reichsrath.'<sup>71</sup> Yet, no British diplomats showed any awareness of Ito's proceedings in Europe, particularly his meetings with German or Austrian constitutional experts,<sup>72</sup> which confirmed Ito's prejudice against the idea of popular sovereignty and democratic government, and inclined him towards the adoption of the principle of social monarchy and a Prussian-style constitution.

Plunkett for one expressed disapproval of the general pro-German tendency. Although his remark to Ito in February 1886 was not directly related to Japan's Constitution, Plunkett questioned Japan's policy as he saw her increasingly 'day by day...throw herself into the arms of Germany, and...shape things here more and more on [a] German model.' In reply, Ito maintained that Germany had won Japan's favour for two main reasons:

...the first cause for which England was herself responsible was the continuance, for years after it ceased to be appropriate, of the policy followed by Sir Harry Parkes. Germany had very cleverly taken advantage of this mistake. Was it in human nature that, while being...harshly and unfairly treated by the British Minister, they should not, to a certain extent, yield to the continued blandishments of the German Minister, who was as steadily inviting them to come to him for support and consolation, as the British Minister repelled them by his criticisms and advice. ...the policy of Her Majesty's Government had entirely changed for the past two years; but the seed previously sown had necessarily thrown out roots, and they could not

<sup>70</sup> Drawn up with the assistance of mainly German legal experts, such as Hermann Roesler and Albert Mosse, the Japanese Constitution showed a greater resemblance to the German model than to other Western models.

<sup>71</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, February 26, 1884, "The Satsuma and Choshu Party in the Government," in FO 46/311, Trench to Granville, Tokyo, March 5, 1884. Also see FO 46/311, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 9, 1884.

<sup>72</sup> They included Rudolph von Gneist and Albert Mosse in Berlin, and Lorenz von Stein in Vienna. Beckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72; Joseph Pittau, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-145.

be eradicated at once, however much Japan herself might now desire it. ...The second cause [was the government's decision] after much careful thought and examination...to form the new Constitution and Codes of Japan, on the model of the Constitution of Prussia, and of the German Code. The Constitution of England was abandoned as a model because it was a growth of centuries which could not be summarily transplanted to an Eastern soil, and it had no corporate shape in which it could be studied, or altered so as to be made suitable to the totally different state of things in Japan. The same applies to the system of English Laws, which, however excellent for England, would be entirely inapplicable in a country of such different habits and traditions. It was therefore necessary to turn for a model to some existing Code such as that of France or Germany.<sup>73</sup>

Interestingly, Plunkett made no comments on either Parkes's allegedly irritable attitude towards Japan or the supposed unsuitability of the British constitution and legal system for Japan. Plunkett did not state explicitly whether or not he accepted the explanations given by Ito. Yet since less than two weeks later he observed that Japan tended to send its officials to Germany because of the better treatment they received in that country than in Britain or America,<sup>74</sup> Plunkett can arguably be said to have acknowledged the truth of Ito's statement. Recognition that Japan saw Germany as more friendly than Britain seems also to have influenced British diplomatic policy towards Japan, especially with regard to treaty revision where more concessions were offered to Japan by Britain in the late 1880s compared to the early years of negotiation. Yet it seems unlikely that Plunkett concurred with Ito that the Prussian constitution was a better model for Japan. Reporting to Lord Salisbury in July 1887 on the Japanese government's decision to engage a British constitutional lawyer to advise Ito in the drafting of the Japanese constitution, Plunkett wrote that such a step was 'a good symptom' and 'another proof...that the Japanese are commencing to see the mistake they made in devoting themselves so entirely to Germany, and are seeking to free themselves from the dependence in which they were placing themselves at one time on that country.'<sup>75</sup> Despite Plunkett's optimistic observation, however, it was soon proved that the hired British lawyer, Francis T. Piggott, had only a minor role to play.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> FO 46/343, No. 35, Conf., Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 1, 1886.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, No 41, Conf., March 12, 1886.

<sup>75</sup> FO 46/368, No. 182, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 2, 1887.

<sup>76</sup> As with other legal advisers to the government, Piggott's task was to clarify theoretical questions concerning the constitution. Yet, it was Roesler's recommendations which were generally accepted by the government. Noboru, Umetani, 'Expectation of a British-type Constitution and Piggott', in *KBS Bulletin on Japanese Culture*, April-May 1972, No. 113, (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (Japan Cultural Society), 1971, pp. 9, 13.

Other statements made by Plunkett, though indicating a desire for Japan to turn away from Germany and look to Britain, are more general and make no specific reference to the adoption of British constitutional ideas by Japan and the abandonment of those of Germany. For example, in early February 1887, Plunkett criticised Japan's general fondness for everything German on the grounds that Britain held greater prestige and influence in the Far East.<sup>77</sup> In a later dispatch Plunkett maintained that only by following British lines could Japan find foreign help and support in the future: 'Japan might coquet for a time with Germany, but for her legitimate helpmate, she must look either to England or America.' In his view, one reason for Japan's general tendency towards Germany was because some leading Japanese, influenced by Doenhoff (former German Minister to Japan), had envisaged the adoption of everything German with the aim of pitting the two European Powers, i.e. Germany and Britain, against each other, so that Japan would reach better terms in its treaty revision.<sup>78</sup> To Plunkett, such a policy would not only alienate British support for Japan, but would also, as he stressed to Inoue in July, bring grave danger to the present Cabinet.<sup>79</sup> Although he was not specific as to the potential danger to the government, as early as March 1887 he had already observed that the excessive German tendency of Ito's policy had caused differences of views within the administration.<sup>80</sup> Subsequent events confirmed his observation, in that following the failure of treaty revision under Inoue, the criticism of the government's inclination towards Germany increased not only among members of the Cabinet but also among *Jiyū minken* leaders.<sup>81</sup>

In criticising Japan's pro-German tendency, Plunkett was undoubtedly concerned with what he saw as the growing influence of Germany in Japan at the expense of British influence and interests. In one area, the Meiji government was employing a greater number of Germans as foreign advisers and the number of German experts in Japan reached its peak in 1887-88 with a total of between seventy and eighty.<sup>82</sup> Since Britain, ever since the early years of the Meiji Restoration, had provided Japan with the largest number of foreign experts in various fields,<sup>83</sup> Japan's new preference was unsurprisingly disliked by Plunkett and led him to complain to Salisbury in February 1887 that 'Japan

<sup>77</sup> FO 46/365, No. 38, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 1, 1887.

<sup>78</sup> FO 46/343, No. 35, Conf., Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 1, 1886.

<sup>79</sup> FO 46/368, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 18, 1887.

<sup>80</sup> FO 46/366, No. 60, Secret, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, March 8, 1887.

<sup>81</sup> E.g., FO 46/369, No. 246, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 18, 1887.

<sup>82</sup> Martin, B., *Japan and Germany in the Modern World*, (Providence: Berghahn Books), 1995, p. 44.

<sup>83</sup> British workers accounted for half of all foreign employees in the Meiji government in 1868-90. Jones, J. H., *Live Machines: Hired Foreigners and Meiji Japan*, (Tenterden, Kent: Paul Norbury Publications), 1980, pp. 7, 45, 48-49.

was placing herself too entirely in the hands of Germany by employing Germans almost exclusively in all the government offices, and giving them thus an influence over the Government in this country which was injurious to the interests of other nations.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, between 1886 and 1888 Plunkett also suspected Japan of granting more commercial favours to German firms to the detriment of British companies, through pressures brought upon the Japanese Foreign Office and also through the manoeuvres of the German Minister in Japan, von Holleben.<sup>85</sup>

When the Meiji Constitution was promulgated on February 11, 1889, Plunkett had already left Japan. Le Poer Trench, who acted as Chargé d'Affaires, made only a brief comment on the event. While he noted in his dispatch of February 12 the significance of the occasion, in that 'it conferred constitutional privileges' which were 'never before possessed by the people of this Eastern Empire,' he did not discuss or even outline the provisions of the Constitution.<sup>86</sup> The only information on the contents of the Constitution was to be found in an article in the *Japan Mail* that Le Poer Trench enclosed, in which a few short comments were made by the newspaper's editor. Among the points made by the latter were that:

...while all financial matters are subjected to parliamentary scrutiny, they are removed from parliamentary control sufficiently to render the Government temporarily independent of a hostile Diet. ... The unwritten but practically acknowledged responsibility of the British Cabinet to parliament may be developed in Japan, as it was gradually developed with us, but there is no recognition of it in the new Japanese system.<sup>87</sup>

Le Poer Trench presumably enclosed the article because he considered it to have at least some significance. Still, considering the importance of the event and the autocratic character of the provisions, which some later historians believed contributed to the development of Japan's authoritarianism and subsequently Japan's militarism in later

<sup>84</sup> FO 46/365, No. 54, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 22, 1887.

<sup>85</sup> Among such case of favouritism claimed by Plunkett was the pressure brought upon the Railway Department to draw its supplies in future from Germany instead of from England, the pressure on the Tokyo Gas Company to engage an engineer from Germany instead of the original plan of employing one from England, and the order sent to the Prefect of Fukuoka Ken to prefer the tender of a German company to construct the proposed railway line in Kyushu. In FO 46/343, No. 35, Conf., Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 1, 1886; *ibid.*, No. 37, Secret, March 2, 1886; FO 46/365, No. 38, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 1, 1887. For the role of von Holleben see FO 46/365, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 13, 1887; *ibid.*, February 18, 1887. Although the alleged favouritism and commercial concessions did not actually take place, Plunkett remained adamant that Japan was showing commercial favours to Germany.

<sup>86</sup> FO 46/389, No. 3, Treaty, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 12, 1889. For details of provisions of the Meiji Constitution, see McLaren, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-48, 193-98.

<sup>87</sup> Article entitled 'Constitution' in *Japan Mail* of February 12, 1889, encl. in FO 46/386, No. 20, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 12, 1889.

decades,<sup>88</sup> it is surprising that he made no judgements on any provisions of the Constitution. Hugh Fraser, who arrived as new British Minister in May, did mention in August 1889 Ito's "Commentaries on the Constitution",<sup>89</sup> but he confined himself to arguing that Ito's document strengthened the anti-foreign feeling in Japan with regard to treaty revision and furnished constitutional obstacles to the proposed appointment of foreign judges in the Japanese Supreme Court.<sup>90</sup> The absence of diplomats' comments may partly be due to the stringent security measures undertaken by the government in drawing up the Constitution. Between 1886 and 1888, the drafting was carried out under conditions of great secrecy by a small group led by Ito in order to avoid potential opposition attacks from those inside and outside the government.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, upon its completion in April 1888, its deliberation and ratification were entrusted to the Privy Council, which had been established that very month and was presided over by Ito himself, thus ensuring a smooth deliberation of the Constitution's draft.<sup>92</sup> The fact that the Japanese themselves refrained from criticising the new Constitution<sup>93</sup> also may have contributed to the lack of interest of British diplomats in passing judgements on the first Constitution of Japan.

### **The Government and the Approaching Diet**

In view of the popularity of the *Jiyū minken* movement in Japan, British diplomats anticipated a hostile encounter between the government and the approaching Diet. Since it was likely to include radical politicians from opposition parties, the Diet was unlikely to endorse government policy without seriously scrutinizing it beforehand. Consequently, the government adopted several measures to counter the opposition forces within the Diet. One such measure noted by Plunkett was the creation in July 1884 of a new peerage

<sup>88</sup> E.g., Maki, J. M., *Government and Politics in Japan; The Road to Democracy*, (London: Thames & Hudson), 1962, pp. 18, 20-21. Such authoritarian principles include most notably the absolute sovereignty of the Emperor and the constitutional restriction on the Imperial Diet in that in the event the Diet refused to approve a new budget, the existing budget was automatically continued in force for a new fiscal year. Also significant in the light of the later strength of Japanese militarism was the article which laid down that the Emperor had the supreme command of the army and navy and which thus placed this power outside the control of the cabinet.

<sup>89</sup> This document was published to explain and enforce the intent and meaning of every provision of the Constitution as understood by its framers, and at the same time to produce reasons to justify their drawing up such a Constitution. See the details in Uyehara, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20, 125-36.

<sup>90</sup> FO 46/387, No. 97, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 16, 1889.

<sup>91</sup> Maki, *op. cit.*, p. 18, Akita, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-65.

<sup>92</sup> Beckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>93</sup> Uyehara, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

which was to provide the basis for a reliably conservative House of Peers in the coming Constitution. As noted by Plunkett in July 1884:

One of the chief preoccupations of the Japanese Government for some time past has been to create a Conservative element capable of balancing the Liberal element in the Constitution which...has been promised for the year 1890. ...The Government consider that the best means of forming this future Conservative element is to create an hereditary nobility.<sup>94</sup>

Another body for checking the unpredictable Diet was the Privy Council (*Sumitsu-in*) established in 1888.<sup>95</sup> However, although its establishment was reported, no reference was made to its having a similar purpose to that of the new peerage, i.e. to balance liberal influence in the Diet.

Another measure was the inclusion of prominent opposition leaders and former Cabinet members in the government. In February 1888 Okuma was invited into the Cabinet as Minister for Foreign Affairs. This development, in Le Poer Trench's view, was effected because the government sought to strengthen itself before it faced the unfriendly Diet in 1890.<sup>96</sup> He made the same observation when Inoue was appointed to become Minister of Agriculture and Commerce in July 1888.<sup>97</sup> In March 1889, another opposition leader and former Cabinet member, Goto Shojiro, became Minister of Communications. As with Okuma and Inoue, his return to office was described by Chargé d'Affaires William G. Napier, who briefly succeeded Le Poer Trench, as due to the government's desire to enhance its power and influence against the coming Diet. Yet Napier more skeptically observed that while Goto's acceptance of the post would doubtless strengthen the government, 'the appointment of a Minister of pronounced radical tendencies may not be without danger to the ultimate existence of the present administration.'<sup>98</sup> His apprehension may have stemmed from the fact that, only a few months prior to his appointment, Goto and his Tosa followers had been involved in such a wide and hostile campaign against the government that the Peace Preservation Ordinance had to be issued to suppress their movement. Napier's statement proved not altogether groundless, as Goto

<sup>94</sup> FO 46/313, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, July 9, 1884. It comprised five categories, namely, prince, marquis, count, viscount and baron. For details on Japanese leaders and their acquired titles see Beasley, *Modern History*, p. 128.

<sup>95</sup> See Ramseyer, J. M., Rosenbluth, F. M., *The Politics of Oligarchy: Institutional Choice in Imperial Japan* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press), 1995, pp. 32, 34.

<sup>96</sup> FO 48/379, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 2, 1888; FO 46/380, No. 37, Conf., Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, April 28, 1888.

<sup>97</sup> FO 46/380, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 6, 1888.

<sup>98</sup> FO 46/386, Napier to Salisbury, Tokyo, April 1, 1889.

did later pose a problem to the government by objecting to Okuma's proposals for treaty revision, thus creating dissension in the Cabinet led by Kuroda.<sup>99</sup>

On January 24, 1889 the Meiji government also effected the removal of the prohibition on political utterances by government officials that had been issued in 1875 and further enforced in 1879 in the wake of the People's Rights movement. To Le Poer Trench, this step was taken because the government realized that the old regulation deprived itself of the best means of educating the people with government views. By allowing public lectures by its officials, not only would the people acquire 'knowledge of the motives and principles by which the framers of the Constitution were influenced,' but they would 'afford support to the measures of the Government under the new regime.'<sup>100</sup>

Fraser was not optimistic about the future working of Japan's constitutional government. One problem, as he saw it, was the internal weakness and loose coalition of the existing Cabinet. As he put it in November 1890: 'The Cabinet is a coalition representing mere expediency, bound together by no common political principles, and supported by no party. Some of its members are, in addition, unpopular or out of sympathy with their countrymen in general.'<sup>101</sup> Even earlier, in October 1889, in reflecting on the composition of the Cabinet under Kuroda and that under Sanjo, Fraser observed that 'The principle of its composition would seem to be the rather difficult one of universal conciliation.'<sup>102</sup> This was due, according to Plunkett, to the jealousies and unceasing struggles for power between the Satsuma and Choshu factions within the government and the difficulty of achieving a united policy, especially since a few Cabinet members represented opposition parties. With these problems present, Fraser concluded that unless the Cabinet members settled their differences peacefully and reached a compromise, when it faced the Diet, the government would encounter major difficulties.<sup>103</sup>

Gubbins, on the other hand, was skeptical of the working of the Japanese Diet. He maintained that while the members of the future House of Representatives held 'ignorant and reckless views' and thus would be likely to hamper government policies, especially with regard to treaty revision,<sup>104</sup> the composition of the House of Peers was also problematic. Gubbins had undoubtedly reflected on the history of Japan, and he

<sup>99</sup> Iddittie, J., *The Life of Marquis Shigenobu Okuma: A Biographical Study in the Rise of Democratic Japan* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press), 1956, pp. 263, 265.

<sup>100</sup> FO 46/386, No. 15, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 30, 1889.

<sup>101</sup> FO 46/399, No. 116, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 21, 1890.

<sup>102</sup> FO 46/387, No. 140, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, October 30, 1889.

<sup>103</sup> FO 46/399, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 21, 1890.

<sup>104</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, January 1890 in FO 46/398, No. 20, Very Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 25, 1890.

maintained that it was difficult to foresee how, in view of the recent abandonment of feudalism, the House's members, who came from different backgrounds including not only the imperial family, the old Court aristocracy and the new rank of nobility, but also (under the categories of appointed members and elected highest taxpayers) *shizoku*, farmers and merchants, could effectively work together. As he put it in November 1890: 'How in a country removed by so short an interval of years from feudal times the plan of associating peasants and nobles in the work of legislation will answer no one can venture to predict, but certainly to Western eyes the experiment appears to be more bold than wise.'<sup>105</sup>

On July 1, 1890, the first general election of the House of Representatives (*Shugi-in*) took place, with a major success for the opposition: of three hundred seats, the *Daido Danketsu* won sixty, the *Jiyūtō* fifty and the *Kaishintō* fifty. Reporting on the outcome of the election in November 1890, Fraser wrote to Salisbury that the success of the opposition in the first general election of Japan had been anticipated.<sup>106</sup> Although he did not elaborate, it is probable that the resurgence of the popular movement since 1887 after the failure of treaty revision contributed to this view. Furthermore, his reports in the previous year show that he considered the Meiji leadership to have been weakened by internal dissensions, one being the rivalry between Okuma and Ito, who was supported by Inoue. Having been informed by Gubbins that there existed opposition within the government against Okuma and his scheme for treaty revision,<sup>107</sup> Fraser observed on October 28, 1889 that this opposition had been patronized and fostered by Ito and Inoue.<sup>108</sup> The subsequent resignation of Okuma, after a nearly successful assassination attempt, further weakened the Cabinet.<sup>109</sup> Apart from Ito and Okuma's rivalry, Fraser also perceived that the Cabinet was divided into Satsuma and Choshu camps, and there was 'very little cohesion in the whole Administration.'<sup>110</sup> With these divisions and rivalries within the government, Fraser predicted in November 1889 that 'the permanence of the

<sup>105</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, October 10, 1890, encl. in FO 46/399, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 17, 1890.

<sup>106</sup> FO 46/399, Fraser to Salisbury, November 17, 1890. See memorandum by Gubbins, October 10, 1890.

<sup>107</sup> Gubbins's memorandum of October 21, 1889, encl. in FO 46/387, No. 134, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, October 21, 1889.

<sup>108</sup> FO 46/387, No. 138, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, October 28, 1889; also see FO 46/387, Private, Fraser to Sanderson, Tokyo, November 15, 1889. Ito opposed Okuma's proposal for the appointment of foreign jurists in the Japanese Supreme Court as against the principle of the new Constitution. Uyehara, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>109</sup> FO 46/387, No. 147, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 22, 1889; FO 46/387, No. 149, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 29, 1889.

<sup>110</sup> FO 46/377, No. 144, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 14, 1889.



Cabinet [then under Sanjo, who succeeded Kuroda] is uncertain.<sup>111</sup> As had been anticipated, it was soon replaced by the Cabinet under Yamagata Aritomo.

### **Factionalism**

One feature of Japanese politics from 1878 to 1890 that frequently attracted the attention of British diplomats was factionalism, which was seen as a key factor affecting the balance of power and the struggle for influence within the Japanese government. So concerned were British diplomats with Japanese factionalism that some of them, particularly Plunkett, Gubbins and Le Poer Trench, tended to interpret important government changes in this light and underestimated other factors.

The most prominent cause of factionalism perceived by British diplomats was the hostility between the Satsuma and Choshu factions within the government. One occasion when this friction particularly preoccupied the diplomats was the period leading to the establishment of the modern Cabinet in 1885, which they often described as the "1885 crisis." Although the diplomats did share later historians' view<sup>112</sup> that the Western-style Cabinet was intended to improve administrative efficiency and increase centralization of power, they attributed its creation largely to the power struggle between the rival factions. In a lengthy memorandum of November 22, 1885, Gubbins maintained that the Sat-Cho hostility, which dated back to feudal times, was stimulated in 1885 by Satsuma resentment that their government colleagues from Choshu (particularly Ito and Inoue) held a greater influence in dictating the policy of the administration. This was despite Satsuma's larger numbers in the *Dajōkan* and popularity in the country.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, the Sat-Cho rivalry, according to Gubbins, also underlay the differences on several major issues of government policy in 1885. Giving some instances, he explained that while Ito and Inoue had adopted a cautious policy with regard to the Korean question<sup>114</sup> in order to avoid complications with China, a more vigorous policy was advocated by the Satsuma party, most notably Kuroda Kiyotaka. Furthermore, as to the proposals for treaty revision, Gubbins maintained that in contrast to Inoue's policy, Vice Minister Yoshida Kiyonari, who was a Satsuma man, favoured a bolder and less conciliatory attitude towards

<sup>111</sup> FO 46/388, No. 32, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 14, 1889, Telegram.

<sup>112</sup> Beckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Uyehara, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>113</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, Conf., November 22, 1885 in FO 46/335, No. 244, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 23, 1885.

<sup>114</sup> In 1884, a quarrel involving two rival Korean factions led to a clash between Chinese and Japanese garrisons in Seoul. After a series of negotiations, a convention was signed at Tientsin in 1885 between China and Japan, by which the independence of Korea was recognized. With the exception of small garrisons to protect their Legations in Seoul, China and Japan agreed to withdraw their troops from Korea. See Gubbins's account in *The Making of Modern Japan*, p. 216.

foreigners, and in his opposition to his chief he had some backing from other members of the government. To resolve this problem, Gubbins reported, Yoshida was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, where his chief, Saigo Tsugumichi, was also a Satsuma man, while Aoki Shuzo (Masashi) from Choshu filled the post left vacant by Yoshida.<sup>115</sup>

British diplomats were rather positive about the likely result of the 1885 tension. In their view, the quarrels between the Satsuma and Choshu parties, though serious, would not escalate into a show of force between the two clans. Instead, the Japanese would settle their differences peacefully in order to avoid foreign interference. As Gubbins put it, 'every Cabinet Minister is thoroughly alive to the great danger, from a foreign point of view, to which Japan would expose herself were she again to be plunged into civil war, however short its duration might be.'<sup>116</sup> Moreover, such a crisis was also seen as part of Japan's political modernisation. As Plunkett pointed out in November 1885, the crisis was 'another of the acute moments of crisis which mark her progress from Eastern to Western ideas.'<sup>117</sup>

As the diplomats had anticipated, a calm settlement of the dispute was effected in December 1885 with the establishment of a new Cabinet from which Kuroda, the Satsuma leader, was excluded. Unsurprisingly, the British diplomats saw this as a triumph for the Choshu party. As maintained by Plunkett and Gubbins, apart from replacing the previous complicated government system with one based on a European model, the object of the creation of the Cabinet was to oust Kuroda, who was most outspoken against the government, especially on Inoue's foreign policies. In Plunkett's words: 'the Cabinet, finding they could not come to any compromise with General Kuroda, (the hot-headed Satsuma leader with whom it seems to be as difficult to act, as it is dangerous to dispense) had decided on making the great change...and at once set about remodelling the Cabinet system itself.'<sup>118</sup>

Sat-Cho factionalism was again the focus of diplomatic attention in 1887 when the Cabinet was split over the question of treaty revision. Though the chief cause of dissension was the basic difference in opinion over the Jurisdiction Convention provision of the treaty revision proposal, which led to Inoue's scheme being criticised by some members of the Cabinet as not only being humiliating to Japan, but also violating her

<sup>115</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, Conf., November 22, 1885 in FO 46/335, No. 244, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 23, 1885.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> FO 46/335, No. 244, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 23, 1885.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 17, December 28, 1885; Memorandum by Gubbins, December 27, 1885 in *Ibid.*, No. 16, December 28, 1885.

sovereign rights, British diplomats also suspected a Satsuma plot to remove Inoue from the government. Amidst the hostile attacks on Inoue, Plunkett reported in June 1887: 'We are in doubt whether some members of the Government may not be seeking an excuse for getting rid both of Treaty Revision and of Count Inouye.'<sup>119</sup> In July, his suspicion seemed to be confirmed when Ito told him that 'Treaty Revision was little more than the stick that had been made use of to attack Count Inouye.'<sup>120</sup> Plunkett's anticipation of Inoue's fate soon proved to be true. Following the suspension of the negotiations by the Cabinet, Inoue was forced to tender his resignation in September 1887. Just as Kuroda's exclusion from the Cabinet in 1885 was seen to mark the victory of the Choshu party over the Satsuma, so the retirement of Inoue was taken by the British diplomats to signify 'a blow to the Choshu Party' and the increasing influence of Satsuma.<sup>121</sup>

The subsequent resignation of Inoue from the post of President of the Law Investigation Commission in October 1887 was further seen by British diplomats as an indication of the declining power of the Choshu.<sup>122</sup> Subsequently, British diplomats similarly tended to perceive the balance of power in the Japanese Cabinet in the light of the Sat-Cho rivalry. For instance, while many later historians explain Ito's retirement from the office of Prime Minister and his acceptance of the Presidency of the Privy Council in April 1888 as being mainly because he wished to concentrate on his work to preside over the deliberations of the draft Constitution,<sup>123</sup> Le Poer Trench maintained that the change which saw the appointment of Kuroda as Prime Minister in Ito's place was a further indication of the strengthening power of Satsuma over Choshu.<sup>124</sup>

While mainly focusing on Sat-Cho rivalry, British diplomats also noted a struggle between a Court party and samurai politicians. One event which reflected this, according to Gubbins, was the promotion of Ito in March 1884 to the post of Minister of the Imperial Household Department. Gubbins maintained that while one reason for Ito's appointment was to facilitate Ito's communication with the Emperor in relation to the task entrusted to him for the drafting of Japan's Constitution, his assumption of a post normally reserved for important Court nobles indicated the Cabinet's wish to undermine the jealous entourage of Court officials whose position surrounding the Emperor it had

<sup>119</sup> FO 46/335, No. 171, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, June 20, 1887.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 207, Conf., July 30, 1887.

<sup>121</sup> FO 46/369, No. 232, Conf., Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, September 27, 1887.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 21, Conf., October 28, 1887.

<sup>123</sup> Uyehara, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>124</sup> FO 46/380, No. 40, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 9, 1888.

long resented.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, the establishment of the modern Japanese Cabinet in December 1885 was also related to the same old rivalry. As put by Gubbins in December 1885, its creation 'may be taken to signify the defeat of that party [Court nobles] and the final triumph of the new school of politicians in the long struggle for power which has been waged ever since the Restoration in 1868.'<sup>126</sup> To Plunkett and Gubbins, the three highest posts held by Court nobles, namely the *Dajō Daijin*, *Sadaijin* and *Udaijin*, were seen by the Cabinet ministers as a barrier to establishing a direct relationship with the Mikado - a view which more or less is also held by some later historians.<sup>127</sup> The abolition of these offices with the creation of the Western-style Cabinet, signified to the diplomats the government's success in severing once and for all the influence of the Court party on the Emperor.<sup>128</sup>

### The Military

Another aspect that received British diplomats' comments was the problem caused to the government by the Japanese military. Though none of the British diplomats went so far as to warn of the danger of Japanese militarism, they did note the potential difficulty caused by the Japanese military to the government in foreign and domestic policy. Parkes, for instance, in reporting on the mutiny in the Imperial Guard on August 23, 1878, observed that while the mutiny occurred because of arrears in pay and the spread of democratic thought, it was also due to the lack of discipline and general insubordination of the military to their superiors. To Parkes such a mutiny could not be regarded without concern, as 'the army constitutes the sole material support of the Government of Japan, which is...essentially absolute and autocrat [sic].' Interestingly, Parkes further maintained that foreigners in Japan had felt for some time past that trouble might be expected from this force 'whenever the men became sensible of their power.' He expressed his hope that such an incident would never happen again, 'but', he wrote, 'I must admit that I should not be surprised if I have to report a different result at some future date.'<sup>129</sup> Similarly, when there arose a difficulty a few months later between Korea and Japan following a Korean attempt to impose duties on imports of Japanese goods and

<sup>125</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, April 4, 1884, in FO 46/311, No. 52, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 9, 1884.

<sup>126</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins, December 27, 1885 in FO 46/335, No. 16, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 28, 1885.

<sup>127</sup> Tsuzuki, *op. cit.*, p. 105; Pittau, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>128</sup> FO 46/335, No. 16, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 28, 1885. See also the enclosed memorandum by Gubbins.

<sup>129</sup> FO 46/230, No. 83, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, August 31, 1878.

exports to Japan, Parkes again expressed his caution about the possible reaction from the Japanese army. He maintained that although he believed that the Japanese government opposed the policy of the pro-war party in Japan, in case of unwanted incidents happening, the Japanese government might have difficulty in controlling an agitation for war by 'their excitable troops.'<sup>130</sup> It is likely that Parkes's repeated mention of possible problems with the Japanese army was founded on his belief that the government had been forced into the Formosan expedition in 1874, since, as he wrote at the time, 'they have to try and please their own ill-disciplined soldiery.'<sup>131</sup>

In the 1880s, problems emanating from the Japanese military were also noted by Plunkett and Gubbins. Reporting in 1885, they maintained that one source of 'constant difficulty' for the government was the insubordination and lack of discipline shown by younger officers in the navy and army, who were educated in Western ideas and principles, whereas most of their superiors had not had the same educational advantages.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, a problem also resulted from the fact that the Japanese military was markedly divided along *han* lines: while the high officers of the army were mainly from Choshu, those of the navy came mainly from Satsuma. Consequently, according to Plunkett in 1885, this caused dissension within the government as its members (who themselves were mainly from Satsuma and Choshu) differed with regard to the expansion of the army and navy.<sup>133</sup> In making such an observation, Plunkett's view was undoubtedly confirmed by Ito, who later stated that one cause of differences in the Cabinet in 1887 was Kuroda's view that the budget for the navy should be expanded while that for the army should be reduced. This was rejected by Ito as he maintained that any suggestion which favoured the expansion of one service at the expense of the other might lead to serious conflicts between the Satsuma and Choshu clans.<sup>134</sup>

## **Conclusion**

During the period 1878-90, Japan's political system underwent many developments. On these various changes, British diplomats' views varied. While they generally expressed an unsympathetic attitude towards the Japanese desire for democratic representative government and had reservations about the future working of Japan's

<sup>130</sup> FO 46/231, No. 125, Conf., Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, December 1878.

<sup>131</sup> Parkes to Wade, Yedo, May 13, 1874, in FO 46/179, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 26, 1874.

<sup>132</sup> FO 46/335, No. 244, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 23, 1885. Also see memorandum by Gubbins, Conf., November 22, 1885.

<sup>133</sup> FO 46/335, No. 244, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 23, 1885.

<sup>134</sup> FO 46/368, No. 201, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 30, 1887.

constitutional government and the operation of the Diet, they favoured the structural reforms that introduced Western-style institutions, notably the new Cabinet system and Privy Council. The Meiji Constitution, however, though it was also modelled on a Western basis, was not much favoured, mainly because of the marked influence of Germany.

The British diplomats' unfavourable attitude towards the Japanese aspiration for a representative government, and even more for democracy in general, can be attributed to several factors. The first was the supposed lack of knowledge by the Japanese people of modern politics. In the British diplomats' view, even the members of political parties were inappropriately educated with regard to the principles of representation and issues of people's rights. Similarly, some members of the Japanese Diet, according to Gubbins, were ignorant or held crude views. Furthermore, Japan's earlier failed experiment with representative institutions in the form of the *Kōgisho* was seen as an unfavourable omen. With membership limited to the samurai class, the assembly had had to be abandoned, it was argued by Kennedy, because of the overwhelming conservative tendency of its members. Yet, to include common people in the *Kōgisho* would have been equally disastrous in his view, as non-samurai were generally uneducated and had no experience of administrative affairs. Therefore, until the general population was exposed to political knowledge, any attempt to establish a democratic representative institution was meaningless. The fact that some Japanese leaders admitted that the introduction into Japan of representative government was premature, at least until the early 1880s, lent support to the British diplomats' views. Moreover, British diplomatic views seem also to have been affected by the unwelcome prospect of a more difficult treaty revision process between Japan and Britain in the event of a representative government being established while the negotiations were in progress. The fact that the representatives of political parties were generally critical of the government's proposals for revision did not fail to suggest to the diplomats that the establishment of a hostile Japanese Diet would lead to an even more unsatisfactory treaty revision settlement than they anticipated already. Another possible reason, though difficult to prove, was that perhaps, the British diplomats did not favour democracy in principle, even in their own country (where, in fact, there was not yet universal suffrage).

Even when arrangements had been made for the commencement of the Japanese parliamentary system, the promulgation of the Constitution and the general election for the Diet, British diplomats remained skeptical about the future success of the system in Japan. For instance, Fraser foresaw that it would be difficult for the government to

maintain its position under the new constitutional set-up. With regard to the Diet, the Lower House's members were seen as not having sound views, and it was predicted that the Upper House would not be able to operate effectively due to its mixed membership of nobles and peasants. The fact that these skeptical observations were made on the eve of the opening of the Diet only emphasized the British diplomats' view of Japan as being unprepared for a representative or parliamentary system.

In view of this skepticism, one may argue that British diplomats were also influenced by 'Orientalist' preconceptions. Yet, if so, theirs was mostly a mild form of 'Orientalism'. While British diplomats perceived the parliamentary system that had taken centuries to evolve in the West to be inappropriate for an Oriental nation such as Japan, which had only two decades earlier emerged from feudalism, they did not entirely dismiss Japan's capability to implement such a system. Even Parkes's particular views of Japan, that she was better fitted to emulate medieval England than to imitate the political system of nineteenth-century England, and that her future political development would resemble that of South American nations rather than that of the more politically advanced countries in Europe and America, do not distinctly imply that Japan was fated to remain politically backward and unchanged. Rather, the views denote that, given sufficient time, Japan might also be able to adopt a modern representative system with success.

It is significant, too, that in commenting on the various changes, British diplomats also show a tendency to favour the Westernization of Japan's political system, especially those involving Western-style structural reforms. This is particularly evident with regard to the new Japanese Cabinet. Although the diplomats did note that the Cabinet had been established for the purpose of administrative centralization and efficiency, more appreciation was shown for the Cabinet's adoption of a 'Western' model and more attention was paid to the 'Western' political background of the Cabinet members whose policies were described as 'progressive'. Yet, the diplomats' favourable views of the Western-based changes were not unequivocal, as they preferred Japan to imitate the English political system rather than those of other European states. This is particularly true with regard to the Meiji Constitution where German influence was viewed with disapproval, especially by Plunkett. Equally noteworthy in respect to the general inclination towards Germany was Ito Hirobumi's allegation of the counter-productive effect of Parkes's critical attitude towards Japan. Although Plunkett did not elaborate on Ito's remark about Parkes, it may have influenced subsequent British diplomacy in Japan, in that more friendly and understanding attitudes were adopted by British diplomats, notably in negotiations for treaty revision in the late 1880s.

Finally, another special interest among British diplomats with regard to Japanese politics was factionalism within the Meiji government, most notably the rivalry between the Satsuma and Choshu factions. This is hardly surprising. By the very nature of their work diplomats tended to monitor and report the changes and balance of power within the Japanese government. Nevertheless, while the numerous diplomatic reports on Japanese factionalism reflect the diplomats' interest in the subject, they also indicate an improved relationship between British diplomats and Japanese leaders. Instead of being cautious and secretive as in the past, Japanese leaders had become more open and informal in discussing the domestic politics of Japan. Admittedly, the diplomats showed themselves poorly informed or lacking in awareness with regard to a few issues such as the important provisions of the Meiji Constitution, the promulgation of the "Three Laws" of 1878 and the development of political parties in Japan. Nevertheless, as a result of their privileged access to such key figures as Ito and Inoue, the reports of British diplomats contain information and insights which historians need to take seriously.



**CHAPTER 4**  
**BRITISH DIPLOMATS' VIEWS OF EARLY MEIJI**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1868 may have been less of a turning point in Japan's economic history than in its political history, but the years which followed it witnessed a sustained Japanese attempt to regain national economic independence, which the unequal treaties of 1858 had limited, and to develop the country's economic strength, notably by a policy of industrialisation. Japan's efforts proved fruitful. By 1890 it had, in the view of most historians, made the break-through to modern economic growth, thus paving the way for its rise as a military power and for its post-World War II emergence as an economic superpower. The reasons for Japan's exceptional economic success have been discussed exhaustively by historians. British diplomats, however, showed little interest in this question. Some of their reports stressed the patriotic motivation of some of Japan's economic policies, but no general assessment of Japan's economic performance was deemed appropriate in this period. In contrast, British diplomats wrote frequently about particular aspects of Japanese trade and industry, and their reports offer extensive evidence of their views of Japanese commercial practice.

**Conducting Foreign Trade in Japan**

Throughout the whole period from 1868 to 1890, but particularly in the earlier part, British diplomats and consular officials expressed concern about Japanese commercial attitudes or practices, which were regarded as detrimental to foreign trade and the interests of foreign merchants. Given the fact that British subjects formed the largest foreign merchant or mercantile community in Japan, British diplomats were likely to protest against any unfavourable attitudes on the part of the Japanese. One basic complaint by British diplomats was Japanese ignorance of commerce and trade as practised by foreigners. This attitude underlay Parkes's comment of April 1868 that though one might see from the new Meiji government a competent and responsible administration, 'the Japanese may not at first give satisfaction in the matter of foreign trade.'<sup>1</sup> Similar comments were also forthcoming from Consuls Russell Robertson and James Troup in 1870 who observed that Japanese local authorities at Hakodate and

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<sup>1</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, April 18, 1868.

Niigata showed utter indifference to matters of foreign trade and appeared to have no idea of the advantages that would result from it.<sup>2</sup> Parkes's immediate reaction was to stress the necessity of foreign instruction: 'the new holders of office will show themselves ignorant and perhaps arrogant, & ...we shall have to educate them, as has been the case with the officers of the late Tycoon.'<sup>3</sup>

One feature of which British diplomats were especially critical was the Japanese monopoly system known as '*kabu*', a term referring to shares in a business or corporation. Forming themselves into such a corporation or guild called a '*shosha*', leading Japanese merchants created an effective monopoly of certain trades, most notably tea, silk and rice. Despite its nominal abolition by the government in 1868, the system continued to operate in different Japanese treaty ports.<sup>4</sup> As with the general question of foreign trade, the diplomats attributed the preservation of the *kabu* system to Japanese lack of familiarity with Western economic practices. In 1870, when Japanese officers at Niigata were reported to have denied that the establishment of a *shosha* at that port in any way concerned foreign trade, Parkes critically concluded that 'Freedom in trade, it may be observed, is an idea with which the Japanese mind is not conversant.'<sup>5</sup> The unfamiliarity, in the view of William G. Aston, secretary of the Legation, was a result of Japanese being accustomed to only one commercial system. He maintained that the Japanese *kabu* system was originally a Chinese institution and 'long custom had so familiarized it to the mind of the Japanese merchant that he was unable to conceive of any other.'<sup>6</sup>

While unfamiliarity with Western practices was a cause for criticism, the fact that the *shosha* received support from government officials might have intensified British diplomats' condemnation of the *kabu* system. Not only was a *shosha* allowed to issue its own notes but it was also able to obtain money loans from the government. With such support, a *shosha* could easily acquire an advantage over foreign traders in that it was able to make large advances to the Japanese dealers in tea and silk, thus outbidding foreign buyers.<sup>7</sup> Unsurprisingly, Japanese officials who were involved with the *shosha*

<sup>2</sup> Their views are enclosed in FO 46/126, Parkes to Japanese Foreign Ministers, Yedo, August 10, 1870. By addressing this letter to 'Japanese Foreign Ministers', presumably Parkes intended to draw the attention of all the leading Japanese Foreign Office officials, not just its nominal head, to the problems referred to in the reports that he had received from the British consuls at the treaty ports.

<sup>3</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, May 13, 1868.

<sup>4</sup> Sugiyama, Shinya, *Japan's industrialization in the World Economy 1859-1899: Export Trade and Overseas Competition* (London: The Athlone Press), 1988, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> FO 46/126, Parkes to Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs, Yedo, August 20, 1870.

<sup>6</sup> Aston's memorandum on the commercial system of Osaka, encl. in Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 29, 1871, Commercial Reports, *Parliamentary Papers (PP)*, 1871, Vol. LXVII.

<sup>7</sup> FO 46/166, No. 19, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, May 23, 1873; Review of the Import Trade of Japan, and of the Tea and Silk Season of 1872-73, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 7, 1873, *Consular Reports (CR)*, 1872.

were criticised by Parkes for being mainly driven by a desire to make quick profits and easy money.<sup>8</sup> Parkes even went as far as to indicate that Japanese officials in general were untrustworthy, and that British consuls should keep a watchful eye over the proceedings of local Japanese authorities in the matters of foreign trade.<sup>9</sup> Similar views were expressed by Troup who cautioned that while the government notifications of 1871 for the abolition of the *shosha* system at Niigata and Osaka indicated a hopeful sign of more liberal ideas on trade, 'What will be the precise result of these changes, it would be premature as yet to attempt to state.'<sup>10</sup> Judging from subsequent events, their reservations were not totally groundless. In 1878 Legation Secretary Augustus H. Mounsey noted that there still existed rice guilds despite the prohibitive law,<sup>11</sup> and in 1881, the formation of a silk guild at Yokohama caused a standstill in the silk trade at the port when foreign silk merchants protested against its monopolistic activity.<sup>12</sup>

Not all British diplomats, however, condemned the Japanese *kabu* system or emphasized the adverse effect of the system on the interests of foreign merchants at the treaty ports. British Minister Hugh Fraser, who succeeded Francis Plunkett in 1889, was neutral in his view of Japanese guilds. On being asked by Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury in October 1889 his opinion on the issue of possible subjection of British trade to the action of Japanese guilds, Fraser observed that the guilds were unlikely to be made illegal by the new Japanese law codes but that they were not in nature and principle open to grave objection. He added that British trade would hardly be much affected as the British merchants were perfectly aware of their existence and 'their modes of action which are not necessarily unjust' and it was unlikely that a dispute between the British merchants and the Japanese associations would occur because 'It is not often that well-founded complaints are made against them [the guilds].' If any serious difficulty should arise, Fraser maintained, a combined protest by the British merchants would be probably sufficient to set the matter right.<sup>13</sup>

Yet the practice of guilds was not the only cause of difficulty between foreign and Japanese merchants. To many diplomats, the Japanese in general lacked the commercial morality of the West. As early as 1868, Parkes described the Japanese as 'neither honest

<sup>8</sup> FO 46/167, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 7, 1873.

<sup>9</sup> FO 46/126, Parkes to Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs, Yokohama, August 22, 1870.

<sup>10</sup> Troup to Parkes, Niigata, February 23, 1871, Commercial Reports in *PP*, 1871, Vol. LXVII. At Osaka, the notification was issued in January 1871, while at Niigata in February 1871.

<sup>11</sup> Report on 'The Rice and Rice Trade of Japan' by Mounsey, Yedo, April 12, 1878, *CR*, 1876.

<sup>12</sup> FO 46/273, No. 143, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, November 26, 1881.

<sup>13</sup> FO 46/387, No. 137, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, October 24, 1889.

nor conciliatory' in conducting business with foreigners.<sup>14</sup> This image was inevitably reinforced by Japanese inclination to forge foreign labels and trademarks, especially in the 1880s. As Japanese manufacturers increased in number, complaints of forgeries of foreign registered trademarks and labels of various consumer goods by the Japanese became frequent. The image of Japanese merchants as 'unlawful imitators' thus became commonplace among the diplomats, who criticised the fraudulent imitations not only because they deprived foreign manufacturers and their agents in Japan of their profits but also because they injured the reputation of foreign goods since the imitated native-made goods with forged labels were of low quality.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the problem was not easy to suppress owing partly to the absence of a patent and trademark convention between Britain and Japan,<sup>16</sup> and partly to the lack of awareness among the Japanese of the value of the trademark system. When trademark regulations (applicable only to Japanese) were issued in 1884 by the Japanese Commercial Department, Consul Robertson reported that the number of applications for registration of trademarks by the Japanese was unsatisfactory. This was because, as he explained, 'the benefits to accrue from registration are not as yet thoroughly understood or appreciated throughout the country.'<sup>17</sup>

Another cause of complaint among foreign merchants was the absence in Japan of a clearance date for taking delivery of goods ordered from abroad. British diplomats maintained that when the market was satisfactory and profits were available, Japanese dealers took delivery of their purchases from foreign importers with all punctuality, but when early clearances were associated with certain loss, foreign merchants were left with their imported goods on hand for a long time, sometimes extending over years, until storage and other charges consumed all possible profit.<sup>18</sup> On this attitude Consul James J. Enslie was most critical:

The code of commercial honour among a certain section of Japanese merchants...is no better than it was when the Treaty ports were first opened to foreign trade. ...[the Japanese] conduct business on their own peculiar and irregular lines, unfortunately in too many instances devoid of those principles of honour which in the West are considered, acknowledged, and accepted as the true and genuine indications of

<sup>14</sup> FO 46/97, No. 250, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, October 13, 1868.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., FO 46/208, No. 159, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 30, 1876; FO 46/366, No. 66, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, March 16, 1887.

<sup>16</sup> FO 46/208, Parkes to Derby, No. 156, Yedo, September 30, 1876; FO 46/314, No. 157, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, September 13, 1884.

<sup>17</sup> Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, June 13, 1885, *Commercial Reports*, PP, 1884-85, Vol. LXXXI.

<sup>18</sup> Aston to Kennedy, Hyogo, May 17, 1881, *CR*, 1880; Longford to Fraser, Hyogo, June 10, 1890, *CR*, 1889.

civilisation.<sup>19</sup>

In complaining of the supposedly deficient character of Japanese merchants, it is not improbable that the generally unfavourable view of the diplomats was also attributable to their frustrations with Meiji government policy with regard to foreign trade. For instance, it was no secret that the government's insistence on adhering to the treaties by restricting foreigners to treaty ports was seen by some British diplomats as a significant obstacle to the development of British import trade. In 1886, Acting-Consul Joseph Longford at Hyogo argued that the restriction not only made it quite impossible for foreign merchants to cultivate direct friendly relations with principal Japanese merchants in the interior, but also prevented the foreign traders from studying or inquiring into the wants and tastes of the Japanese people at large. Consequently, the foreign merchants had been obliged to conduct all business transactions with a class of brokers on whom a monopoly of foreign business had been conferred.<sup>20</sup> In addition, there was also a problem related to the Japanese commercial code (before it was fully reformed in 1890), which was generally described by British diplomats as 'undeveloped' and 'unsatisfactory' and disadvantageous to British merchants. In 1876, when reporting on a breach of a contract between Japanese and British merchants, Parkes observed that the existing system illustrated the 'unreasonable character of the Japanese law of guaranty' which was 'opposed to all the principles of sense and honesty.'<sup>21</sup> In 1879, Chargé d'Affaires J. G. Kennedy reported on great delays in Japanese courts in suits between foreigners and Japanese, and on 'the unsatisfactory state of the Bankruptcy Law of Japan'<sup>22</sup> and his view was shared by Consuls Marcus Flowers and James Troup and Acting-Consul Martin Dohmen.<sup>23</sup>

### **Problems of Japanese Trade and Industry**

As a newcomer to the international scene, Japan was seen as lagging far behind in the field of trade and industry. This was illustrated, in Acting-Consul Joseph Longford's view, in the low per capita income of Japan compared to that of countries like Brazil, Spain, Italy, not to mention commercial nations of high rank such as Britain, France and

<sup>19</sup> Ensle to Fraser, Hyogo and Osaka, April 15, 1891, CR, 1890.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum by Longford on 'The Import Trade of Great Britain with Japan', encl. in Plunkett to Rosebury, Nikko, July 26, 1886, Commercial Reports, PP, 1887, Vol. LXXXII.

<sup>21</sup> FO 46/208, No 157, Parkes to Derby, September 30, 1876.

<sup>22</sup> FO 46/248, No. 185, Conf., Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, October 22, 1879.

<sup>23</sup> See consular reports by Flowers, Troup and Dohmen enclosed in *Ibid*.

the United States.<sup>24</sup> Also reflecting on Japan's per capita income, Plunkett in 1885 inferred that the value of 1 pound sterling for each six persons in Japan 'speaks but poorly either for the productive powers of the country or the industrial capacity of the people.'<sup>25</sup> In general, as the following passages will show, British diplomats were unanimous in the view that Japan's economy was undeveloped and that she had to increase her productive power and expand her commerce and national enterprise. In this, it is worthy of note that their view corresponded with the Meiji government's policy of '*shokusan kōgyō*' (develop industry and promote enterprise).<sup>26</sup>

Yet any move to develop Japan's trade and industry, in British diplomats' view, was hindered by various obstacles. As observed by Parkes as late as 1883, only by the removal of those obstacles which 'impede the development of their national wealth and resources' could 'the well-being of the people...be materially advanced.'<sup>27</sup> One such obstacle was the government's interference in commercial transactions. In fact, it was not uncommon for Parkes to insist that the Meiji leaders let the commerce of the country take its own natural course. On one occasion during the celebration of the Japanese New Year at Tokyo in 1871, Parkes addressed some Japanese ministers on the importance of allowing greater freedom to the enterprise of the people and on the need of the government 'to abstain from the cramping interference they are so prone to exercise.'<sup>28</sup> The same gist was also conveyed in his conversation with Iwakura on October 4, 1873.<sup>29</sup> In advising the Meiji government, Parkes was driven by the desire not only to help the economic development of Japan but also undoubtedly to obtain commercial benefits for Britain.<sup>30</sup> The exercise of free trade in Japan would benefit not only the Japanese but also British merchants. Other diplomats too, were certainly concerned with British economic interests. Yet, unlike Parkes, they rarely gave direct advices to Meiji leaders.

No interference was more obvious to British diplomats, than the government's prohibition of the export of surplus rice by individual merchants as the government

<sup>24</sup> General Report on the Trade of Japan for the Year 1884, Longford to Plunkett, Tokyo, June 30, 1885, in Plunkett to Salisbury, July 14, 1885, *CR*, 1884.

<sup>25</sup> Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, July 16, 1886, Summary of the Trade of Japan for the Year 1885, *CR*, 1885.

<sup>26</sup> For policies of '*shokusan kōgyō*' in the 1870s to 1890s see e.g., Nakamura, T., *Economic Growth in Prewar Japan* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press), 1983, pp. 59-60.

<sup>27</sup> Parkes's farewell speech to foreign residents of Yokohama, August 27, 1883, quoted from Dickins and Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, Vol. 11, p. 347. See obstacles to Japan's industrial development as pointed out by Smith, T. C., *Political Change and Industrial Development in Japan: Government Enterprise, 1868-1880* (California: Stanford Univ. Press), 1955, pp. 24-40.

<sup>28</sup> FO 46/138, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, March 11, 1871. Parkes however, made no mention of the names of Japanese ministers whom he addressed.

<sup>29</sup> FO 46/168, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, October 6, 1873.

<sup>30</sup> Nish, I., *Biographical Portraits: Britain & Japan* (Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library), 1994, p. 13; Checkland, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

reduced the rice trade almost to a monopoly under its own control.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, as perceived by Parkes and Mounsey, not only was the profit less than it would have been if open trade had been allowed, but the productive power of the country and the expansion of Japan's trade were restricted as Japanese farmers, having been forbidden to export the surplus of their harvests, had no inducement to grow more rice than could be consumed at home.<sup>32</sup> No less significant were the government's restrictions in the mining industry whereby all mines and the rights to work them belonged by law to the government, and no foreigners were allowed to hold shares or invest capital in the mines. These restrictions, according to British diplomats, affected the output of the mines and quality of the processed minerals.<sup>33</sup>

Another factor which was seen as hampering Japan's trade and industry was Japan's monetary problems, notably the serious fluctuations in the value of the Japanese currency and the incessant drain on the country's gold and silver reserve. Following the establishment of the new government in 1868, a large number of paper notes were issued to pay for the increasing administrative expenses of the government, while the Japanese specie reserve was decreasing as a result of the need to finance the imbalance in trade and other government expenditures. Most diplomats observed that from 1868 to the mid-1880s, Japan's monetary problem not only increased prices of necessary commodities, but also rendered all business transactions uncertain and impeded the operation of Japanese industries which required time for development. Furthermore, the diminishing specie reserve of Japan, in the diplomats' view, limited the purchasing power of the country and, therefore, foreign trade.<sup>34</sup> Despite the government's policy to redeem the inconvertible paper currency beginning from 1881, the diplomats also noted that the value of the currency, though improved, continued to fluctuate as no confidence was placed in it by foreign and Japanese merchants. In fact, it was not until 1886 that the depreciated paper money regained its silver value and became stable.

Equally detrimental to the development of Japan's trade and industry in the eyes of British diplomats was the lack of foreign capital. In the whole 1868-90 period, only two foreign loans were contracted by the government, the first in 1870 and the second in

<sup>31</sup> FO 46/114, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, October 28, 1869; Troup to Parkes, Niigata, January 25, 1871, *CR*, 1870-71; Gower to Parkes, Hyogo, April 4, 1873, *CR*, 1872.

<sup>32</sup> FO 46/166, No. 19, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, May 23, 1873; Report on 'The Rice and Rice Trade of Japan' by Mounsey, Yedo, April 12, 1878, *CR*, 1876.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g., report on 'The Mines of Japan', Plunkett to Parkes, Yedo, April 22, 1875, *CR*, 1874.

<sup>34</sup> See e.g., Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, July 31, 1882, *Commercial Reports*, *PP*, 1882, Vol. LXXII; FO 46/272, No. 48, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, May 14, 1881.

1873.<sup>35</sup> Parkes perceived that as Japan's revenue depended mainly on its land production, investment from outside the country was necessary to promote Japan's economy and enterprise.<sup>36</sup> The results of the exclusion of foreign capital, in British diplomats' views, were firstly, the expensive internal transportation system and secondly, the limited number of domestic steamship companies. In addition, the relatively slow increase in Japan's exports after 1868 was also seen as an effect. Once the country was opened to foreign capital, Plunkett claimed in 1886, 'there can be little doubt that a large impetus will be straightway given to the whole export trade.' He maintained that if foreign capital were used, staple products could be processed and packed for export at the place of production at one-half the cost at which they were done at the open ports, and that immense unused tracts of land might be brought into the cultivation of staples for export.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, to many diplomats, the absence of foreign capital had also resulted in the slow development of mines in Japan.<sup>38</sup> On the motive for the prohibition of foreign capital, Chargé d'Affaires R. G. Watson observed that not only did the Japanese government not wish to extend the extra-territorial jurisdiction which prevailed over foreigners within the Treaty limits, but they were also driven by a 'jealous policy' towards foreigners. The government, he maintained, feared that if foreigners were admitted into the interior of Japan and allowed to take part in industrial operations, the gains of Japanese merchants would be curtailed.<sup>39</sup>

Poor communications also, it was held, affected the commercial development of Japan. British diplomats perceived that with very few navigable rivers, and with pack-horses and coolies as the main means of transport, it was difficult for Japanese merchants to convey heavy produce from the interior and to sell them at a cheaper price to foreigners at the treaty ports due to the high cost of transportation. In their view, what Japan needed was the construction of ordinary roads suited to vehicles for the conveyance of goods through its producing districts instead of a policy of concentrating mainly on harbour improvements at the open ports.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Parkes noted that although Japan possessed marine transport along its coasts, the service was very

<sup>35</sup> See Tiedemann, A.E., 'Japan's Economic Foreign Policies, 1868-1893', in Morley, J.W., (ed.), *Japan's Foreign Policy 1868-1941* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press), 1974, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> FO 46/257, No. 157, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, September 11, 1879.

<sup>37</sup> Summary of the Foreign Trade of Japan for the Year 1885, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, July 16, 1886, CR, 1885.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. FO 46/257, No. 157, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, September 1879; Hall to Parkes, Nagasaki, May 12, 1883, CR, 1882; Quin to Fraser, Nagasaki, May 23, 1889, CR, 1888; Longford to Fraser, Hakodate, April 30, 1891, CR, 1890.

<sup>39</sup> Watson to Parkes, November 30, 1873, CR, 1873.

<sup>40</sup> FO 46/181, No. 164, Parkes to Derby, Hakodate, August 30, 1873; Flowers to Parkes encl. in FO 46/191, No 55, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 13, 1875.



expensive as it was limited in amount and mainly confined to two privileged companies, namely the Mitsubishi Company and Kyodo Unyu Company.<sup>41</sup> Even in 1886, the problem of excessive dearness of transport, in Longford's view, continued to exist. This was despite the construction of over 431 miles of railway tracks directly linking the Japanese richest silk, tea and rice-producing provinces with one or other seaport. That rail freight charges were excessive was proved, according to Longford, by the average annual freight volume of less than 40,000 tons carried on the leading Tokyo-Yokohama line during the period of six years, 1880-85, and by the average receipts from the goods traffic during the same period, which were about 50,000 yen. By contrast, the average receipts of a Japanese shipping company were about 200,000 yen per annum.<sup>42</sup>

The operations of the *shosha* were also regarded as obstructing the growth of Japan's trade. British diplomats observed that as the *shosha* had the authority to determine the value of domestic produce and Japanese merchants had to report all their transactions with foreigners to the association, the merchants' ability to purchase foreign goods was thus checked by the guild.<sup>43</sup> Parkes wrote in 1882: 'While this state of things continues, and the Japanese retain their present economical opinions which deprive trade of the freedom that is essential to its vitality and run it into a narrow groove of monopolists and guilds, the commerce of the country must be expected to remain in a comparatively stationary condition.'<sup>44</sup>

On the future of Japan's mining industry, diplomats' views slightly varied. The most skeptical was Parkes's. While some diplomats regarded Japan as having the potential to develop the production of its minerals, particularly coal, for export,<sup>45</sup> Parkes maintained that the assumption that Japan possessed great mineral wealth was an exaggerated conjecture.<sup>46</sup> Parkes's pessimistic view may have owed something to a report by Plunkett, who concluded that Japan was not yet likely to take a high rank among the mineral-producing countries of the world. In the report Plunkett also wrote:

The Japanese burrow for ore whenever they suspect its existence without system or forethought. A hole is dug in the side of a hill, and, if ore is found, the work goes on; if not, it is soon abandoned, and a fresh hole is dug in some other spot which may seem to give promise of

<sup>41</sup> Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, July 31, 1882, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1882, Vol. LXXII.

<sup>42</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1886.

<sup>43</sup> FO 46/126, Parkes to Sec. of State, August 22, 1870; Troup to Parkes, Niigata, January 25, 1871, *CR*, 1870-71.

<sup>44</sup> Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, July, 31, 1882, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1882, Vol. LXXII.

<sup>45</sup> E.g., Flowers to Parkes, Nagasaki, March 26, 1875, *CR*, 1874.

<sup>46</sup> FO 46/191, No. 62, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 25, 1875.

better things. If unsuccessful, this also is abandoned, but the two openings thus made, although perhaps not half a Ton of ore has been extracted from either of them, are called mines, and help to swell the grand Lists of Mines which are so constantly palmed off upon Travellers in the Interior, and help to encourage the idea that Japan is a real El Dorado.<sup>47</sup>

Yet the diplomats were of the same view that the problems of Japan's mining industry arose chiefly from the government's legislation forbidding the employment of foreign capital. Consequently, as they saw it, with the exception of a few mines worked with foreign methods, there were no facilities for increasing the output and for transporting or shipping it.<sup>48</sup> In addition, lack of foreign expertise was also regarded as a reason why complaints being sometimes made about the quality of the refining of various minerals such as coal and copper, especially from the smaller mines.<sup>49</sup> Consul Adolphus Annesley's statement summed up the general view of British diplomats:

The blind policy so obstinately pursued by the Japanese Government in prohibiting (with but one or two exceptions) the working of their gold, silver, and copper, and other mines by foreigners is greatly to be deplored, and tends considerably to the impoverishment of this fine country.<sup>50</sup>

As with mining, Japan's agricultural industry was criticised for its lack of modern machinery. Plunkett recorded even in 1886 that 'All agricultural implements used in Japan are still of the most primitive nature, and the application of machinery to farming is as yet entirely unknown to the Japanese farmer.'<sup>51</sup> This was mainly attributed by Longford to Japanese farmers being too conservative to use foreign devices. Giving one instance, he maintained that despite the effort of the Department of Agriculture and Commerce to produce modern ploughs imitated from American models for sale to Japanese farmers, no success had yet been attained: 'Only about one in 500 has yet even seen them, and farming being generally on a very small scale, few of those who have seen them can make up their minds to pay down 25 yen for implements to be employed

<sup>47</sup> Plunkett's report on 'The Mines of Japan', April 22, 1875 in FO 46/191, No. 62, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 25, 1875. Also see the report in *CR*, 1873.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, FO 46/166, No. 19, Parkes to Granville, May 23, 1873; Hall to Parkes, Nagasaki, May 12, 1883, *CR*, 1882; Quin to Fraser, Nagasaki, May 23, 1889, *CR*, 1888.

<sup>49</sup> Enslie to Plunkett, Nagasaki, June 23, 1884, *CR*, 1883; Longford to Fraser, Hakodate, April 30, 1891, *CR*, 1890.

<sup>50</sup> Annesley to Parkes, Hyogo, June 12, 1876, *CR*, 1875.

<sup>51</sup> Report on the Import Trade of Britain and Japan, Plunkett to Salisbury, Nikko, July 26, 1886, Miscellaneous Series, *CR*, 1886.

in work for which they have heretofore used spades costing only one yen.<sup>52</sup>

The Japanese were criticised for using primitive methods not only in ploughing their land, but also in preparing their produce for export. For instance, it was noted that the Japanese main staple export, silk, suffered from deteriorating quality and irregularity in size owing partly to hand-reeling method.<sup>53</sup> Were foreign capital allowed and foreign machinery used, Parkes envisaged that improvement in silk quality would be seen:

Unaided, the Japanese people are too poor to achieve any large improvement in that direction; it can only be brought about by a liberal admission of foreigners into the interior, and by substantial guarantees being given to the capital required for the establishment of large factories. In the opinion of the best judges, there is in this country a tremendous waste of cocoons caused by defective modes of smothering, drying, storing, and reeling. Foreign skill would effect a great saving.<sup>54</sup>

A similar problem was observed in Japanese tea. Throughout 1868-1890, complaints were made about that Japanese tea was of poor quality partly due to the old method of firing tea leaves in pans or placing the leaf under the sun, and that modern machinery for firing purposes was hardly used by Japanese tea producers.<sup>55</sup> The following statement by Plunkett provides one example:

As far as I am aware, no machinery has yet been imported for use in the preparation of tea for export, though machinery of this kind is very largely and profitably used in the Indian plantations. If proper steps were taken for its introduction into Japan a fair sale might soon be found for it, and in addition, the tea industry of the country greatly benefited.<sup>56</sup>

Still related to agriculture was the production of rice. Although it was not until the mid-1880s that rice was exported from Japan in significant amounts, it is noteworthy that great emphasis had consistently been placed by British diplomats on Japan's development of its rice industry. Parkes for one considered that Japan had become too dependent on the export of tea and silk. As he wrote to Japanese Foreign Minister Terajima Munenori in 1874, 'It is unfortunate that the exports of Japan should be mainly confined to Tea and

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum by Longford on 'Various Japanese Native Manufactures', in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, April 13, 1887, Miscellaneous Series, CR, 1887.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g., Lowder to Parkes, Kanagawa, March 10, 1870, CR, 1869-70; Enslie to Parkes, Kanagawa, July 6, 1882, CR, 1883; Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, June 19, 1883, CR, 1883.

<sup>54</sup> 'Review of the Japan Silk Trade for 1874-77', Parkes to Derby, Yedo, July 31, 1877, CR, 1876.

<sup>55</sup> Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, May 20, 1884, CR, 1883; Longford on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886, in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, CR, 1886; Quin to Trench, Kanagawa, June 29, 1888, CR, 1887.

<sup>56</sup> Report on the Import Trade of Britain and Japan, Plunkett to Salisbury, Nikko, July 26, 1886, Miscellaneous Series, CR, 1886.

Silk',<sup>57</sup> for in these products Japan had to face strong competition from China. He added that though there were other commodities for export such as vegetable wax, camphor, tobacco and minerals, they were produced in insignificant quantities and an uncertain manner. Furthermore, rice could be abundantly produced for export without foreign assistance. As he put it, 'the cultivation of rice is probably therefore the most promising field of industry that the country possesses. Every peasant in Japan has a perfect knowledge of its culture, and would need no foreign aid in bringing under cultivation the long tracts of rich land, which are now left untilled.'<sup>58</sup> Parkes's emphasis on the rice industry was further shown in a later dispatch where he noted that '[the rice export] would probably confer, by its free development, greater benefit on the agricultural class of Japan than the trade in any other production.'<sup>59</sup> Other diplomats also favoured Japan's role as a producer of rice although they did note several factors that obstructed the expansion of Japan's rice exports. Plunkett, for instance, while pointing at the high rate of rice freight charges owing to the absence of an immediate outlet for the main rice-producing centres of the country, observed that rice 'ought to be looked upon as one of the chief, if not the chief, source of trade' since 'silk and tea...are produced only in a comparatively few districts, while rice is cultivated universally throughout the country.'<sup>60</sup>

Other diplomats, such as Consul J. C. Hall and Acting-Consul J. T. Longford, while they did perceive some problems of the rice industry (e.g., the government's monopoly of the export of rice through its agent Mitsui Bussan Kaisha; the prohibition on foreigners on purchasing and shipping rice at ports adjacent to the chief rice-producing districts, apart from Hyogo and Niigata; and the power reserved by the Treaty to the government to entirely forbid the export of rice at any time), were optimistic about the future of Japan's rice. They observed that not only was there a large and steady demand in Australia, New Zealand and Europe for the rich and palatable Japanese rice, but also that a larger market would readily be found for the product.<sup>61</sup> By 1886, as new markets were found in the United States and Canada, more and more hopes were expressed by British diplomats for the future prosperity of the rice export. As put by Consul John Quin, 'There is every evidence that this staple will assume a very important role in the future export's

<sup>57</sup> FO 46/182, Parkes to Terajima, Yedo, September 26, 1874, encl. in FO 46/182, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 26, 1874.

<sup>58</sup> FO 46/181, No. 164, Parkes to Derby, Hakodate, August 30, 1874.

<sup>59</sup> Summary of Japan's Foreign Trade for the Year 1878, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, September 11, 1879, CR, 1878-79.

<sup>60</sup> Summary of Japan's Foreign Trade for the Year 1883, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, August 1, 1884, CR, 1883.

<sup>61</sup> Hall to Plunkett, Nagasaki, June 26, 1884, CR, 1883; General Report on the Trade of Japan for the Year 1884 by Longford, June 30, 1885, in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 14, 1885, CR, 1884.

from this country.'<sup>62</sup> The fact that Japan's rice commanded a better price in the markets than most other national types, to Longford, further demonstrated the increasing recognition gained by Japan of the good quality of its rice.<sup>63</sup>

Given the diplomats' strong encouragement for the development of the rice industry, one may argue that British diplomats viewed Japan mainly as an agricultural producer rather than a manufacturer of modern products. In fact, the attitude was most evident in Parkes. Not only did he stress the development of Japan's rice, but he also maintained in a private letter to Isabella Bird in 1880 that any Japanese attempt in manufacturing industry would be in vain. As he put it:

It is to her agricultural and mineral resources that Japan must look for advancement of wealth. Okuma estimates that less than a fourth of the area of Japan has yet been brought under cultivation, and while the soil therefore affords such a field for the industry of her population - which is essentially an agricultural one - it is idle to waste time or money in starting the manufacture of fabrics of a kind alien to the country, with the view of prematurely converting an agricultural people into a manufacturing one.<sup>64</sup>

Considering the prevailing view among foreigners in Japan at that time, such an 'Orientalist' attitude among some British diplomats, namely their perception of Japan as mainly a primary producer, should perhaps not be surprising. In October 1874, the *Japan Weekly Mail*, one of the leading foreign newspapers in Japan also observed that Japan should concentrate on the development of rice and silk instead of endeavouring to produce manufactured goods.<sup>65</sup>

In terms of modern industry, with the exception of a few remarks (which will be discussed later with regard to Japan's competitiveness), the prevalent view among British diplomats in general was that Japan had only a limited potential. Although they did note the establishment of various modern factories producing cotton manufactures, woollen cloth, matches, pharmaceutical medicines, chemicals, glassware, bricks, cement, etc., the goods produced were often described as restricted in volume and variety or poor in quality.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, with regard to shipbuilding, though the diplomats did observe that

<sup>62</sup> Quin to Fraser, Nagasaki, May 23, 1889, *CR*, 1888; also see Troup to Fraser, Hyogo, June 10, 1887, *CR*, 1886.

<sup>63</sup> Report on the Trade of Hyogo and Osaka by Longford, encl. in Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, June 29, 1889, *CR*, 1888.

<sup>64</sup> Parkes to Bird, Seven Oaks, Aug. 19, 1880, quoted from Dickins and Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>65</sup> See the article 'The Future' in the *Japan Weekly Mail*, 10. 10. 1874, in Falt, O. K., *The Clash of Interests: The Transformation of Japan in 1861-1881 in the Eyes of the Local Anglo-Saxon Press* (Oulu: The Historical Association of Northern Finland), 1990, p. 163.

<sup>66</sup> E.g., Aston to Kennedy, Hyogo, May 17, 1881, *CR*, 1880.

there were dockyards owned by government and private companies at Hyogo, Osaka, Hakodate and Nagasaki, which were constantly employed for repairs, conversion of Japanese junks into modern vessels and construction of men-of-war and commercial steam vessels, they also noted that Japan continued to import foreign steamers and vessels.<sup>67</sup> While there were some lengthy remarks on modern Japanese light industry, diplomatic reports on the shipbuilding industry are generally brief. It was probably due to the relatively undeveloped state of the Japanese industry that the diplomats disregarded its development. In fact, it was not until 1896 that the shipbuilding industry of Japan really took off following the first Sino-Japanese War.<sup>68</sup> Although Le Poer Trench in one instance observed that a Japanese naval mission under Admiral Kabayama, Vice-Minister of Marine was being sent to Europe in 1887 to study naval construction and dockyards, he made no observation as to the effects of such a mission on the general development of shipbuilding industry in Japan.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the scarcity of diplomatic comments may also be a result of the Japanese government being secretive in a matter which related to the naval security of Japan.<sup>70</sup>

As to whether the overall diplomats' views of the development of trade and industry in Japan influenced the general British policy towards the country, one may briefly assess the issue of treaty revision, which involved in addition to the abolition of extraterritoriality, the granting to Japan of tariff autonomy in return for commercial access to the interior.<sup>71</sup> While earlier British resistance to treaty revision was affected by trade and legal considerations, and by the opinions of British merchants at the treaty ports, namely to maintain tariff advantages as long as possible and to secure the privilege of extraterritoriality,<sup>72</sup> British general attitudes by the mid 1880s, though showed a tendency to accommodate Japanese demands and was less influenced by the pressure of treaty port merchants,<sup>73</sup> indicated a disinclination to consider revision based solely on the economic development of Japan. Given the diplomats' observations of the various problems surrounding the development of Japan's commerce, it is perhaps not surprising

<sup>67</sup> E.g., Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, May 20, 1884, CR, 1883.

<sup>68</sup> Nakamura, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>69</sup> FO 46/369, No. 230, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, September 27, 1887.

<sup>70</sup> The indication of the tendency on the part of the Japanese government is shown in Parkes's report of 1879 in which he mentioned that he did approach Japanese Foreign Minister on the object of a visit to Japan by Edward Reed (a British naval architect who had provided Japan with three vessels of war), but was refused any information. FO 46/244, No. 71, Conf., Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, April 7, 1879.

<sup>71</sup> The new treaty between Britain and Japan was signed in 1894 though the extraterritoriality did not disappear until 1899 and a tariff autonomy was not achieved by Japan until 1911.

<sup>72</sup> Hoare, J. E., *Japan's Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements: The Uninvited Guests 1858-1899* (Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library), 1994, pp. 98, 100-101; Daniels, *op. cit.* pp. 184-185, 196-197.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

that diplomats' comments on treaty revision, even in the late 1880s, made no specific reference to the industrialisation of Japan. Instead, they allude to the development and progress of Japan in general. As recorded by Gubbins in 1887:

Her progress may not in all respects be uniform, but she is moving and moving fast, and in justice to her, and also in a measure to ourselves, lest we should be taken by surprise, it should be remembered that what we could not give to her a few years ago, might now be safely be conceded, and that what we are prepared to grant today is not necessarily the measure of what we may yield tomorrow.<sup>74</sup>

In fact, diplomats seem not to have taken Japanese industrialisation into account when considering their primary role: the protection of British interests. In 1883, Legation Secretary Ernest Satow observed that unless the Japanese endeavours to achieve an equal footing with the West were encouraged, Japan would make common cause with China and Korea, and thus place the interests of Western Powers in a disadvantageous position.<sup>75</sup> From a different angle, Plunkett, Fraser and Gubbins generally maintained in the late 1880s especially when other Foreign Powers began to initiate independent negotiations for revision of their treaties with Japan that the revision was necessary to safeguard British interests.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, they also perceived that by agreeing to treaty revision, Britain could avoid granting more concessions than necessary to the Japanese at the expense of foreign interests especially in the matters of extraterritoriality and jurisdiction.<sup>77</sup>

### **Japan as a Competitor**

As Japan opened itself to global trade, competition was inevitable. On Japan's competitiveness, British diplomats' views, though varied, manifest a similar tendency to focus on difficulties and problems faced by Japan either in exporting its products to the international market or in establishing economic self-sufficiency in the home market.

<sup>74</sup> Memorandum by Gubbins 'Treaty Revision', December 30, 1887, in FO 46/379, No. 10, Conf., Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 17, 1888.

<sup>75</sup> PRO 30/33/12, Satow Papers, Memorandum by Satow to Plunkett, September 24, 1883.

<sup>76</sup> FO 46/387, No. 97, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 16, 1889. The countries which had by 1889 signed provisional conventions with Japan included the United States, Russia and Germany.

<sup>77</sup> FO 46/368, No. 188, Very Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 9, 1887; also see FO 46/398, No. 20, Fraser to Salisbury, January 25, 1890, Memorandum by Gubbins.

On Japan's main staple export, raw silk, British diplomats and consular officials did not fail to note the existence of strong competition from China and Europe.<sup>78</sup> It was reported in 1870 that as China, France and Italy produced silk in larger quantities, their prices were lower than those of Japan. Yet a greater disadvantage of Japan was seen to be the deteriorating quality of its silk owing to the careless manner in which it was reeled and to the large export of silk-worm eggs of good quality from Japan to Europe.<sup>79</sup> By the mid-1870s, owing to these disadvantages, Japan's silk had fallen into disfavour in the European market according to Robertson when reporting the Yokohama 1875 trade returns.<sup>80</sup> Even though Japan's silks soon found a new and larger market in America, British diplomats observed that competition by European silks was by no means ended, as the latter gradually penetrated that market. Robertson, for instance, noted in 1884 that due to 'the low prices and large quantities of Italian silk,' they have 'persistently passed for sale in Europe and in America, and have interfered with the sale of Japans.'<sup>81</sup>

In the late 1880s, some British consuls, notably John Quin and James Troup, noted an increase in the competitive power of Japan in the silk market. Not only were large tracts of land brought under mulberry cultivation, but re-reeling establishments were set up in various localities, instructors were engaged, the best models for preparing silk were studied, and official notifications were issued encouraging the people take greater care in reeling. In the light of this development, Quin concluded in 1888 that Japan's future as a silk producer was bright: 'Under such auspices, Japan at no very distant date will rank among the most important of the silk-producing countries of the world, while climate, soil, and skill alike guarantee a quality second to none, and the cheapness of labour will defy competition as to price.'<sup>82</sup> Troup perceived that the results of the government's efforts were that many Japanese filatures could 'compare favourably with those of Europe' and Japanese silk became 'a great favourite with manufacturers in the United States.'<sup>83</sup> His favourable view of Japan's competitiveness is further shown in his 1890 report that 'The silks of Japan now occupy a very high place...first quality of

<sup>78</sup> General Report on the Trade of Japan for the Year 1884, Longford to Plunkett, Tokyo, June 30, 1885, encl. in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 14, 1885, CR, 1884.

<sup>79</sup> Lowder to Parkes, Kanagawa, March 10, 1870, CR, 1869-70; Summary of Japan's Foreign Trade for the Year 1869, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, March 31, 1870, CR, 1869-70; Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, June 19, 1883, CR, 1883.

<sup>80</sup> Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, May 8, 1876, CR, 1875. The decline of Japan's silk import to the European market is also noted in Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>81</sup> Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, May 20, 1884, CR, 1883. On the increasing competition from European silks against those of Japan in the American market, see e.g., Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>82</sup> Quin to Trench, Kanagawa, June 29, 1888, CR, 1887.

<sup>83</sup> Troup to Napier, Yokohama, April 15, 1889, CR, 1888.



Japanese silk is considered equal to the extras of Italy, and the extras of Japan are inferior to none.<sup>84</sup>

In regard to tea export, Japan's main rival in supplying green tea to American and Canadian consumers was China. While Japan's tea was noted to have largely displaced Chinese tea in the American market by the mid 1870s,<sup>85</sup> British diplomats observed that it continually suffered from deteriorating quality due mainly to lack of care and attention in preparing the tea.<sup>86</sup> In dwelling on this problem, Ensle maintained that the lack of attention might be attributable to the high cost of labour in Japan resulting from the inflation of the late 1870s. Consequently, tea growers resorted to the 'sun-drying' to process tea leaves instead of using a better method of firing in pans, in order to save labour and the expense of charcoal.<sup>87</sup> Hall, the consul at Nagasaki, also claimed that little attention was paid to the cultivation and preparation of the tea because Japanese labourers could earn more money as coal-heavers.<sup>88</sup> Longford, on the other hand, hinted at a deficiency in the character of Japanese growers. He maintained that whereas the first exports had been of good quality, the growers grew more and more careless in their pickings as they were driven by the desire for quicker and greater profits. Consequently, in order to hide the steadily-decreasing quality of the tea, foreign shippers in Japan were compelled to have recourse to artificial methods of colouring and preparation.<sup>89</sup> Referring to the government's attempts to encourage the better preparation of the tea by establishing Tea Guilds in March 1885 in various tea-producing districts, Robertson maintained that 'It is unfortunate that there has been no improvement in the quality of the leaf, where improvement was both desired and expected.'<sup>90</sup> The remedy, in Longford's view, was the use of modern machinery not only for quality but to lower the cost of production. Yet to encourage the Japanese to opt for modern machinery, foreigners would first have to introduce the technology to the Japanese.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Troup to Fraser, Yokohama, April 30, 1891, *CR*, 1890. Sugiyama noted Japan's competitiveness on the international market due to technological development in preparation and silk reeling. See Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>85</sup> Quin to Trench, Kanagawa, June 29, 1888, *CR*, 1887. Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>86</sup> See e.g., Fletcher to Parkes, Yokohama, February 23, 1869, *CR*, 1868; Hall to Parkes, Nagasaki, May 12, 1883, *CR*, 1883; Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, May 20, 1884, *CR*, 1883.

<sup>87</sup> Ensle to Parkes, Kanagawa, July 6, 1882, *CR*, 1883.

<sup>88</sup> Report on the Trade of Nagasaki by Hall, encl. in Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 26, 1891, *CR*, 1890.

<sup>89</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1888.

<sup>90</sup> Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, June 13, 1885, *CR*, 1884.

<sup>91</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1886.

The problem became more serious as a result of excessive exports by Japanese shippers.<sup>92</sup> While annual consumption of tea in America was about 20,000,000 lbs. per annum,<sup>93</sup> the volume of Japan's tea export very often exceeded the demand. For instance, Parkes noted that the quantities of Japan's tea exported in 1876 already amounted to 34,000,000 lbs.<sup>94</sup> The blame for this was laid at the door of Japanese merchants by Quin:

These shipments, having no legitimate outlet, and being thrown upon the markets from unaccustomed channels, were recklessly sold in the central markets of New York and Chicago, and, as they served to increase the previous excessive supply, they produced a depression and low range of prices such as had never before been experienced in the United States and Canada.<sup>95</sup>

Besides green tea, there was a considerable effort by Japan from the mid-1870s to produce black tea for export to London and the American market. Yet competition from Indian black tea was viewed as too strong for Japan and the likelihood of Japanese success was seen as remote. As Ensle noted in an 1883 report, 'The tea has on the whole, proved a failure, although the production continues on a limited scale. The climate and soil of this country appear unfitted to the growth of plants producing a leaf of the quality necessary to make good black.'<sup>96</sup> Not only did Japan fail to emulate the success of the Indian black tea in the London market, but the latter was also seen as a threat to Japan's green tea in the American market. In an 1886 report Longford observed that due to the unusually delicious aroma of the Indian black tea, it only required to be known in and appreciated in America to largely displace green tea from China and Japan.<sup>97</sup>

On the competitiveness of Japanese minerals such as coal, copper and sulphur, British diplomats concerned themselves mainly with problems faced by Japan in competing in the international market. As to coal, though the diplomats did observe that some coal mines in Japan produced good quality coal, such as the Takashima mines at Nagasaki, which produced the best steam coal in Asia (and better, even, than Australian coals),<sup>98</sup> they failed to note that by 1880, Japanese coal had established a dominance over other coals (from Britain, Australia, Formosa and America) in the Shanghai coal market

<sup>92</sup> Ensle to Parkes, Kanagawa, July 6, 1882, *CR*, 1883; Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, May 20, 1884, *CR*, 1883.

<sup>93</sup> Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>94</sup> Summary of Japan's Foreign Trade for the Year 1876, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, July 31, 1877, *CR*, 1876.

<sup>95</sup> Quin to Trench, Kanagawa, June 29, 1888, *CR*, 1887.

<sup>96</sup> Ensle to Parkes, Kanagawa, July 6, 1882, *CR*, 1883; also see Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, June 23, 1877, *CR*, 1876; Dohmen to Parkes, Kanagawa, June 15, 1879, *CR*, 1878.

<sup>97</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1886. For superiority of Indian black tea, see Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>98</sup> See e.g., Hall to Parkes, Nagasaki, May 12, 1883, *CR*, 1882.

due chiefly to cheap prices. Moreover, their accounts were also limited as they hardly mentioned Japan's coal in the Hong Kong and Singapore markets.<sup>99</sup> One problem persistently pointed out by the diplomats was the limited penetration of the Shanghai market by Japanese coal. This was attributed mainly to a failure to increase output owing to the absence of foreign capital and machinery, a direct result of Japan's mining law of 1873 prohibiting foreigners from holding any substantial interest in a mine. With the exception of the Takashima and Miike mines (which were modernised before the law was promulgated), other coal mines worked with primitive Japanese methods as the Japanese, according to Hall in 1883, 'had not the capital nor skill to work.' Hall observed that not only did the primitive methods produce only a limited amount of coal but they resulted in high prices because of their inefficiency.<sup>100</sup> When a coal strike took place in Australia in 1888 and a great demand was made for Japanese coal, Acting-Consul Bonar observed that the problem of limited stock continued to prevail. Nevertheless, he also perceived that the heavy demand had increased the value of Japan's coal up to 50 per cent. and this greatly benefited small mine owners, enabling them to use proper foreign machinery.<sup>101</sup>

As with coal, similar problems were pointed out with regard to the production of copper and sulphur in Japan. Of the many copper mines in Japan only a few, such as the Ashio mines, worked with foreign machinery.<sup>102</sup> The high price of the Japanese copper, which was a result of the limited use of modern machinery, consequently affected the competitiveness of the Japanese metal in the European market. As observed by Annesley, 'There is no doubt that if this valuable metal were properly worked it could be produced at a price that would admit of its being largely exported to London, where its superior quality gives it a higher value than the best Chili bars.'<sup>103</sup> In addition, Troup observed that some complaints had also been made about the poor quality of the metal, which naturally affected its reputation in the European market.<sup>104</sup> As to sulphur, Japan had Sicilian sulphur to compete with. Quin observed that despite the richness of Japanese sulphur produced at Atanasoburi mines in Hokkaido compared to that of Sicily, and the fact that the Atanasoburi deposit was concentrated at one spot, Japan was greatly surpassed by her rival due to the absence of facilities for increasing the sulphur output, and for transporting it. He added that as opposed to about 10,000 tons per annum of the

<sup>99</sup> Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 173, 182, 189, 195.

<sup>100</sup> Hall to Parkes, Nagasaki, May 12, 1883, *CR*, 1882; Hall to Plunkett, Nagasaki, June 26, 1884, *CR*, 1883.

<sup>101</sup> Bonar to Fraser, Hakodate, May 20, 1889, *CR*, 1888.

<sup>102</sup> 'Report on the Ashiwo Copper Mines' by R. De B. Layard, Tokyo, February 4, 1887, Miscellaneous Series, *CR*, 1887; also see report on 'The Mines of Japan', Plunkett to Parkes, Yedo, April 22, 1875, *CR*, 1874.

<sup>103</sup> Annesley to Parkes, Hyogo, June 12, 1876, *CR*, 1875.

<sup>104</sup> Troup to Fraser, Yokohama, April 30, 1891, *CR*, 1890.

Hokkaido mines, the annual production of Sicilian sulphur amounted to about 400,000 tons. Sicily also had an advantage in the lower freight costs to the Liverpool and New York markets. Notwithstanding this, Quin however, maintained that the Hokkaido sulphur could still be competitive, and that it should find a ready market in Australia, Britain and America if the price was lower than that fixed by Japanese producers.<sup>105</sup>

Apart from the articles for export, Japan's competitiveness may also be seen in her attempt to establish economic self-sufficiency and end the foreign dominance of Japan's trade by replacing goods manufactured in Japan for imports, competing with foreign banks in Japan and conducting direct shipments to America and Europe. It is noteworthy that diplomatic reporting of the Japanese desire for economic independence was mainly a feature of the mid-1880s. This corresponded with the fact that there was a surge of nationalistic or patriotic feeling in Japan in the mid-1880s against Western elements in political, cultural and commercial aspects of Japan.<sup>106</sup> If the political system indicated a tendency for an authoritarian administration, and the social system saw evidence of a revival of Neo-Confucian values and rejection of Western culture, Japanese attitudes towards the economy reflected their desire for independence and self-sufficiency.

As to the import substitution, this was most evident in the manufacturing of cotton yarn and piece goods by Japanese producers to displace cotton manufactures from England and Bombay, which were traded chiefly by British merchants. In fact, the import substitution of cotton was important for Japan since the cotton trade not only had been marked by foreign domination of the Japanese market, but also greatly contributed to Japan's imbalance of payments and endangered Japan's finances, as cotton manufactures formed the largest portion of Japan's imports in 1868-90.<sup>107</sup> From 1880 onwards, as a result of the Japanese efforts, the import of cotton yarn and piece-goods showed a steady decline<sup>108</sup> and a considerable amount of Japanese cotton goods began to be exported by the late 1880s and 1890s.<sup>109</sup>

Despite this evidence of industrial growth, James Troup and John Gubbins were pessimistic. Troup observed that the production of Japanese spinning mills at Hyogo in 1890 could hardly compete with that of Bombay mills: 'Whether these [Japanese cotton-spinning mills] are likely, in a fair field, to be able to compete with the Indian mills is,

<sup>105</sup> Quin to Fraser, Nagasaki, May 23, 1889, *CR*, 1888.

<sup>106</sup> Howe, C., *The Origins of Japanese Trade Supremacy: Development and Technology in Asia from 1540 to the Pacific War* (London: Hurst & Co.), 1996, p. 158.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>108</sup> Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>109</sup> Howe, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

however, extremely doubtful.'<sup>110</sup> Also skeptical, but to a lesser degree, was Gubbins, who observed in 1888 that 'the danger to the English and Bombay cotton yarn trade to be apprehended from the increasing competition of Japanese yarn is materially lessened' by the high cost of production of Japanese yarn. This was because, he argued, most cotton-spinning factories in Japan were conducted on a small scale with a limited number of spindles.<sup>111</sup> Consul Enslie was also skeptical of the future of the Japanese cotton-industry though his views were somewhat inconsistent. In an 1889 commercial report he noted that 'Japanese-made yarn is becoming a more or less formidable competitor' and it might successfully compete with Indian and English yarn as labour costs were cheaper in Japan.<sup>112</sup> Yet in an 1890 report he somehow changed his view, noting that though the competition posed by the Japanese mills was severe, it would not last and the imported yarn would soon resume its predominance.<sup>113</sup>

Those with positive views included Longford, Le Poer Trench and Plunkett. In view of the steady decline of cotton goods import and the increase of the import of raw cotton for the use of Japanese mills, Longford wrote in an 1886 commercial report,

...it is not European or American, but purely native competition, that British manufacturers will have to struggle against, and if the struggle is to be successful, it cannot be instituted too soon, nor with too much energy. Even now, when there is neither organisation of labour, nor the aid of weaving machinery to help them, Japanese appear to be able to make cotton piece goods which advantageously compete with their correlative English imports. Will they not be able to do so to a still greater degree, when weaving factories, with the best mechanical appliances, are established throughout the country, as they most probably will in the course of a very few years?<sup>114</sup>

The future of the Japanese cotton industry, in Longford's view, was thus bright. Even in its relatively undeveloped state, it could produce competitive goods. He added that the decline of cotton-goods import was not only a result of the increasing output of the Japanese mills: there were also other contributory factors, which included economic distress among the lower and middle classes (who were the principal consumers of the imported cotton goods), restricted circulation of money, foreign dealers' failure to consult Japanese tastes in respect of either patterns or dimensions, and the deteriorating quality of

<sup>110</sup> Troup to Fraser, Yokohama, April 30, 1891, *CR*, 1890.

<sup>111</sup> Summary of Japan's Foreign Trade for the Year 1887 by Gubbins, encl. in Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 7, 1888, *CR*, 1887.

<sup>112</sup> Enslie to Salisbury, Yokohama, April 17, 1890, *CR*, 1889.

<sup>113</sup> Enslie to Fraser, Hyogo and Osaka, April 15, 1891, *CR*, 1890.

<sup>114</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, encl. in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1886.

the English cotton-piece goods.<sup>115</sup> His awareness of Japan's potential is further shown in a statement that the Japanese cotton piece-goods would in time compete with English in the Chinese market. He maintained that already in Japan there existed some favourable elements such as the readiness shown by private Japanese investors, the existence of a fair supply of skilled spinners to act as instructors, the existence of both low and intelligent labour, the absence of strikes, and the low cost of land and building in Japan. And though Japanese production of raw cotton was insufficient to meet the wants of the cotton-spinning factories, an abundant supply could be obtained at cheaper cost from China. Given these circumstances, Japan, in his view, had only to adopt foreign machinery to be able to export cotton-goods to China.<sup>116</sup>

A positive view was also expressed by Chargé d'Affaires Le Poer Trench. Noting a report on the rapid development of the Japanese cotton-spinning industry in the *Japan Daily Mail* of January 3, 1888, which recorded that there were about 22 factories at work with a total of 76,000 spindles by the end of 1886, Le Poer Trench maintained that Japan would soon become an exporter of cotton goods. Le Poer Trench also portrayed a promising future for Japan by comparing the Japanese cotton-manufacturing industry with that of Britain:

Englishmen had comparatively few facilities for its prosecution, and had to struggle with the greatest difficulties as raw material was produced at an immense distance...the case is entirely different with Japan. The country is within comparatively easy reach of the great centres of cotton supply; is itself a cotton-producing region; has command of probably the cheapest and most skillful labour in the world, and enjoys the blessing of full security of life and property. Under such circumstances there is every reason to regard the recent increase of cotton-spinning factories as a healthy earnest of that growth.<sup>117</sup>

While Plunkett also noted Japan's competitiveness, his statements were less direct. In 1886, for instance, instead of pointing to the active operation of the Japanese mills, he attributed the steady decline of British cotton-goods import mainly to the poor quality of English cotton manufacture, the general trade depression in Japan, the economic difficulties among the Japanese farming class, and the restriction of foreigners to the open ports, which prevented them from interacting freely with leading Japanese

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Report on the 'Native Cotton Manufactures of Japan' by Longford, in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 19, 1887, Miscellaneous Series, CR, 1887.

<sup>117</sup> Report on Cotton Manufactures in Japan, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 5, 1888, Miscellaneous Series, CR, 1888.

merchants and inquiring into the wants and tastes of the general population of Japan.<sup>118</sup> In another instance, Plunkett argued to Lord Granville in 1885 that the 'temporary' occupation of Port Hamilton by Britain should not be given up, but maintained so that the port would serve as a depot for British trade in the Far East to counter the increasing competition from Japanese merchants. Although he did not specifically say so, it is likely that Plunkett had in mind Japanese competitiveness in the cotton industry when he stated:

I cannot help feeling that the days of "Foreign Settlements" and "enforced Tariffs" are rapidly passing away, and that the small profits on which Trade must now be carried on will make it every day more and more difficult for the English merchant to compete on the spot with the native, whom education and the telegraph are every day placing more on a par with them.<sup>119</sup>

As with cotton manufactures, British diplomats' views differed on manufactured Japanese silk goods. Consul Hall at Yokohama was dismissive in 1886 of Japan's ability to compete with imported silk piece-goods from Britain and Germany. The reason, as he perceived, was the high cost of production in Japan.<sup>120</sup> In contrast to Hall's view, Quin claimed that Japanese silk manufactures benefited from the low production cost due to cheap labour: 'the excellence and cheapness of labour in this country enabling goods to be produced at marvellously cheap prices, and of very good taste and workmanship.' Furthermore, Quin also perceived Japan as a potential exporter of manufactured silks. He maintained that in 1886, Japanese light cheap fabrics, such as handkerchiefs and neckties, were already in demand in the United States, while brocades and heavy dress materials, though they had not yet been exported, attracted a good deal of attention in the European market.<sup>121</sup>

As to woollen manufactures, a woollen factory was set up by the government at Senju near Tokyo with several Germans as instructors. A number of sheep farms with imported sheep from Australia and America were also established to supply the factory with cheaper wool. In 1879, Acting-Consul Martin Dohmen, though skeptical of the success of the sheep farms, acknowledged the potential of the Japanese manufacture of woollen cloth, which, in his view, 'would doubtless soon cease to be an article of

<sup>118</sup> Report on the Import Trade of Britain and Japan, Plunkett to Rosebury, Nikko, July 26, 1886, Miscellaneous Series, CR, 1886.

<sup>119</sup> FO 46/330, No. 151, Very Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, May 25, 1885. Port Hamilton, which lies between Korea and Japan was annexed by Britain in early 1885 amidst a possible Anglo-Russo conflict.

<sup>120</sup> Report on the Trade and Shipping of Kanagawa by Hall, encl. in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 11, 1887, CR, 1886.

<sup>121</sup> Quin to Trench, Kanagawa, June 29, 1888, CR, 1887.

importation'.<sup>122</sup> Longford in 1886, however, maintained that neither the woollen manufactures produced at Senju nor the farms had achieved their targets. He explained that while Japanese woollen cloth and flannel were cheaper and superior to imported goods in wearing quality, both, however, contained defects, principally in roughness of surface. Japanese flannels were also limited in the number of designs and thus 'quite unable to compete with those of flannels imported from Germany or England.' Moreover, the Senju factory still had to be dependent upon imported wool due to the short supply of the Japanese sheep farms. Nevertheless, not all the results were disastrous. Longford observed that the factory's output reduced Japan's import of woollen goods as nearly all the cloth and a great portion of the flannel were used by the government for the Army and Navy. He added that it was likely that Japanese private companies would be tempted to imitate the Senju woollen factory in making profits by commencing similar undertakings.<sup>123</sup>

Japanese competition with Europeans in other manufacturing products, however, in the view of British diplomats, was insignificant even in the late 1880s. Robertson, for instance, noted that though Japan was able to produce some chemicals, she could not compete successfully with Europe due to the high cost of production.<sup>124</sup> In 1886 Longford observed that Japan still had to be dependent upon imports of heavy chemicals from European countries and their volume was yearly increasing. He then concluded that 'British manufacturers...need fear no competition to any serious extent, if they will only adapt themselves to the requirements of the Japanese market.'<sup>125</sup> The Japanese metal industry was equally regarded by British diplomats as uncompetitive. For instance, while Japanese nails were seen as of excellent quality, their price greatly exceeded those of imported nails from Belgium. Furthermore, although Japanese-made utensils of foreign prototype were cheaper in price, they were regarded as primitive in shape.<sup>126</sup> Thus, in both products, foreign imported goods, according to British diplomats, were much preferred by the Japanese at large to those manufactured by the local Japanese factories. Nevertheless, there were exceptions, however, in that Longford observed that in two industries, namely the match-making and the manufacture of foreign-shaped umbrellas, Japan might in future become a strong rival to European importers in the Japanese as well

<sup>122</sup> Dohmen to Kennedy, Kanagawa, May 10, 1880, *CR*, 1879.

<sup>123</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, encl. in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1886.

<sup>124</sup> Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, June 19, 1883, *CR*, 1883.

<sup>125</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, encl. in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1886.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*; Memorandum by Longford on 'Various Japanese Native Manufactures', encl. in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, April 13, 1887, Miscellaneous Series, *CR*, 1887.



as Chinese markets.<sup>127</sup>

Japan's competitiveness was also considered in the field of banking where British diplomats noted that Japanese banks, notably the Yokohama Specie Bank, had strongly competed with foreign banks in securing large quantities of foreign paper money drawn upon America and Europe. In doing so, the Specie Bank had offered merchants a lower rate of exchange by half to one per cent. under the quotations of the foreign banks.<sup>128</sup> To Plunkett, the Japanese move was driven by their desire for economic independence. Despite the assertion by the Japanese banks that they could give favourable terms to their customers because they could work at lower rates than the foreign banks, Plunkett observed that the concessions resulted from government support with the view of 'elbowing out the Foreign Banks altogether in time.'<sup>129</sup> However, Plunkett added that though the nationalistic approach might ultimately reach its aim, it would adversely affect not only the local foreign banks, but the Japanese as well: 'it is doubtful whether their policy in fighting the European local banks is not one which some day, at a moment of monetary crisis, may have a disastrous result for Japanese finance.'<sup>130</sup> This was because, he maintained, as many foreign merchants preferred the attractive terms of the Japanese banks, the foreign banks were forced to make profits by shipping their stock of Japanese silver in large quantities to other countries, thus contributing to the drain of silver reserve of the country.

Le Poer Trench too was critical, noting that the exchange practice of the Specie Bank was conducted on a basis that was 'neither sound nor reasonable.' Although he was uncertain of the existence of government support in 'elbowing out' the foreign banks, he did share Plunkett's view of the adverse effect on Japan. So far, he argued, the exchange operations had been profitable because the depression of world silver had worked in Japan's favour, but the process of importing bullion and converting into silver yen for others to ship away was a costly operation and would result in a loss to the country.<sup>131</sup> Giving an example, he maintained that the total export of silver yen from Japan by the foreign banks in 1887 was over 10,000,000 yen, of which the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank alone had exported close to 7,000,000 yen.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Report on the Trade and Commerce of Japan for the Year 1886 by Longford, encl. in Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, May 28, 1887, *CR*, 1886.

<sup>128</sup> The foreign banks included the Oriental Bank, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, as well as banks from Germany and France.

<sup>129</sup> FO 46/344, No. 46, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 21, 1886.

<sup>130</sup> FO 46/365, Plunkett to Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, January 19, 1887.

<sup>131</sup> Report on the Finances of Japan, Trench to Plunkett, Tokyo, December 20, 1886, *CR*, 1886.

<sup>132</sup> Report on the Finance of Japan, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, June 18, 1888, *CR*, 1887-88.

The Japanese banks, especially the Bank of Japan and the Yokohama Specie Bank were also noted to have competed with the foreign banks in financing shippers of produce, particularly silk, to carry out direct exports to Europe. By doing so, Plunkett perceived that the Japanese banks could not only draw the bulk of business out of the foreign banks' hands, but also encourage direct shipments by Japanese merchants to Europe without having to be dependent upon foreigners as middlemen. Again, Plunkett underlined Japan's desire for economic independence. He observed that by operating direct shipments, the Japanese not only could evade part of the heavy commissions to foreigners required for the maintenance of the foreign mercantile warehouses, but more importantly could 'shake themselves free of the foreign middlemen.' Interestingly, Plunkett added that Japan viewed the foreign residents as 'the main obstacle to the realization of her hopes for the recognition of the autonomy of Japan as a nation' since unlike their counterparts in Europe, the foreigners in Japan were seen by the Japanese as less liberal in ideas and not in favour of Japan's progress. As he put it:

...until her object [Japan's commercial autonomy] is attained, she will address herself as far as possible to the producer in Europe, who, as a rule, is more liberal in his ideas than are the small clique of Foreigners resident in the Settlements, some of whose immediate personal interests are not in favor of progress.

To Plunkett, although the Japanese attempt might succeed on account of their persistence and perseverance, their ventures were dangerous and risky. Not only did the Japanese have to incur heavy expenses in financing the direct shipments as they had to hire foreign ships, but their dealings had not always been profitable.<sup>133</sup> In the short term, at any rate, his prediction was confirmed by later diplomats. Both Consuls Enslie and Troup reported in their 1890 trade returns that the result had been so disastrous that the Japanese contemplated returning to the old system of buying from foreigners, and instead of actively financing direct shipments, the Japanese banks confined themselves to only buying foreign paper money from merchants.<sup>134</sup>

In shipping, while British diplomats noted an increasing effort from Japanese steamers to end foreign dominance of Japan's coasting trade, the possibility that Japan might become competitive in overseas shipping was ignored. On the coastal shipping, Consuls Frederick Gower, Adolphus Annesley, Acting-Consuls Martin Dohmen and W.

<sup>133</sup> FO 46/344, No. 46, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 21, 1886.

<sup>134</sup> Enslie to Fraser, Hyogo and Osaka, April 15, 1891, *CR*, 1890; Troup to Fraser, Yokohama, April 30, 1891, *CR*, 1890. On the failure of Japanese direct export of silk and tea, see e.g., Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, pp. 132, 156-57.

A. Wooley testified to the increasing numbers and tonnage of the Japanese shipping, particularly of the Mitsubishi and Nippon Yusen Company, and noted that they gradually monopolized the shipping traffic between different Japanese ports, which had previously been conducted by foreign companies.<sup>135</sup> The lack of British diplomats' comments, however, on Japanese overseas shipping reveals their unspoken assumption that Japan was unable to challenge the monopoly of the foreign shipping companies. In fact, that assumption was justified up to 1890, as until then Japan's overseas trade was still largely carried in foreign vessels.<sup>136</sup> E. A. Griffiths, Acting Vice-Consul in Tokyo, for instance, reported that over 90 per cent. of merchandise exported from and imported into Japan during 1889 was carried in foreign ships with more than half of the total conducted in British ships alone.<sup>137</sup> Although his figures were slightly different, Legation Secretary de Bunsen observed that foreign shipping amounted to 61 per cent. of the total number of ships entering Japan in 1890 with the tonnage of 2,416, 714. The total of Japanese vessels, though it showed an increase from 1889 with 986 ships and 892,291 tons, was surpassed by that of foreign vessels in number and tonnage.<sup>138</sup>

### **Japan's Finances**

In matters of finance, the Japanese were generally viewed by British diplomats as lacking the experience and knowledge that had developed into a science among the European nations, and thus required Western assistance of some kind. One aspect which reflects this view was Japan's currency, which suffered continuous and serious depreciation of its value after the 1868 Restoration. The problem persisted, in Lowder's words in 1870, owing to the 'inexperience and ignorance' of Japanese rulers, who had decided to solve their financial problems by adopting a 'simple but fatal way which more experienced Governments have long since abandoned as a remedy which brings on a worse disease than that it seems to cure.' That fatal way was the tampering with the value

<sup>135</sup> Gower to Parkes, Hyogo, June 30, 1874, *CR*, 1873; Annesley to Parkes, Hyogo, June 16, 1875, *CR*, 1874; Dohmen to Parkes, Kanagawa, June 15, 1879, *CR*, 1878; Wooley to Kennedy, Niigata, October 8, 1879, *CR*, 1878-79. Nakamura, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>136</sup> Hyde, F. E., *Far Eastern Trade 1860-1914* (London: Adams & Charles Black Ltd.), 1873, p. 157. Among foreign shipping companies were the Oriental and Occidental Company, Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, Blue Funnel Line (all three were British companies), Messageries Maritimes (French), Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company (American), and Nord Deutsche (German). Sugiyama noted that it was not until 1910 that Japanese surpassed foreign merchants in direct shipping. Sugiyama, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>137</sup> Summary of Japan's Foreign Trade for the Year of 1889 by Griffiths, encl. in Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 15, 1890, *CR*, 1889.

<sup>138</sup> Summary of Japan's Foreign Trade for the Year 1890 by de Bunsen, encl. in Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 1, 1891, *CR*, 1890.

of the currency.<sup>139</sup> In order to finance the increasing expenses of the administration, the government had issued an excessive amount of inconvertible paper notes. They also issued unrestricted quantities of coinage, which suffered from a debasement in value as the weight and purity of the coins were continuously altered. On top of that, spurious imitations of the government paper money had been produced in the territories of some *daimyo*. Not only did the problem cause prices of everyday goods to rise violently, but it also rendered commercial operations and transactions hazardous and uncertain. In remedying the problem, redemption of the currency was seen by British diplomats as necessary.<sup>140</sup> Some diplomats also suggested Western assistance in the form of foreign loans. They observed that had the Japanese government borrowed money from abroad, the state of the Japanese currency would have probably improved.<sup>141</sup> With regard to the counterfeit paper money, Flowers observed that the government should issue a new paper currency, based upon a Western model, where one value would be attached to the face of every note in a clear manner, intelligible to both foreigners and Japanese.<sup>142</sup>

When Matsukata Masayoshi, Japanese Finance Minister initiated a deflationary policy in 1881 to improve Japan's finances and currency, confidence was expressed by Kennedy in the ability of the new Minister of Finance, whom he described as 'an able man of business.'<sup>143</sup> Yet, while noting Matsukata's sound policy, Chargé d'Affaires Kennedy maintained that several years must elapse before the government could hope to restore equilibrium in its finances.<sup>144</sup> And indeed, it was not until 1886 that the value was finally restored with the resumption of specie payments by the government effective from January 1, 1886. Besides the slowness of the process, diplomats also attributed social hardships and economic depression in the mid-1880s to the deflationary policy as it caused a fall in the prices of commodities such as rice, which was the main source of income of the people of Japan.<sup>145</sup> Although the situation finally improved, Gubbins perceived that the success of the redemption policy was not without foreign help. He reported that in summer 1885 a Japanese proposal with regard to the gradual issue of

<sup>139</sup> Lowder to Parkes, Kanagawa, March 10, 1870, encl. in Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, March 12, 1870, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1870, Vol. LXV.

<sup>140</sup> E.g., Fletcher to Parkes, Yokohama, February 23, 1869, *CR*, 1868; Flowers to Adams, Nagasaki, January, 31, 1872, *CR*, 1871. For more details on the problem of Japanese currency, see Adams, T. F. M., *A Financial History of Modern Japan* (Tokyo: Research Ltd.), 1964, pp. 5-7.

<sup>141</sup> E.g., Flowers to Parkes, Hyogo, March 31, 1879, *CR*, 1878; FO 46/247, No. 157, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, September 11, 1879; FO 46/258, No. 156, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, September 14, 1880.

<sup>142</sup> Flowers to Adams, Nagasaki, January 31, 1872, *CR*, 1871.

<sup>143</sup> FO 46/284, Kennedy to Granville, Conf. No. 12, Yedo, January 23, 1882. For details of the Matsukata deflationary policy, see e.g., Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8; Hyde, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>144</sup> FO 46/272, No. 48, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, May 14, 1881.

<sup>145</sup> E.g., Gubbins's memorandum, April 26, 1886 in FO 46/344, No. 67, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, May 4, 1886; Report on the Finances of Japan, Trench to Plunkett, Tokyo, December 20, 1886, *CR*, 1886.

convertible notes, as a prelude to complete resumption of specie payments, had been laid before an unnamed foreign assayer of the Osaka Mint. As the proposal was criticised as having the effect of still further depreciating the value of the currency, the proposal was consequently revised in line with a plan recommended by the foreign assayer.<sup>146</sup>

The desirability of foreign assistance was also pointed out in relation to Japanese public loans. In December 1883, in raising capital for the construction of the Nakasendo Railway, the government issued public loan bonds to the amount of 20,000,000 yen bearing interest at the rate of 7 per cent. per annum. Robertson was implicitly critical of this step: 'Doubts have been expressed as to whether the Japanese Government would not have done better by obtaining the required capital by means of a foreign loan than by resorting to the issue of public loan bonds, the interest on which will in the long run amount to more than would have been payable on a foreign loan.'<sup>147</sup> The same view was expressed by Le Poer Trench in commenting on both the Nakasendo Railway Loan Bonds and the Navy Public Loan Bonds issued in 1886. While he described the issuance of the public bonds as possible because of 'the marked improvement in the home-borrowing power of the Government' and commented that they 'will lead up to something quite new in Eastern finance - the conversion of the internal debt,' he nevertheless held that foreign loans would help improve Japan's finance at a much faster rate. He explained that as capitalists had eagerly invested in bonds of all descriptions, this resulted in floating capital becoming more and more fixed capital in excess of the investing power of the country. Given the increasing stability of the Japanese currency, the reinvestment in trade of the capital which had been diverted into bonds would, according to Le Poer Trench, 'manifestly be assisted and accelerated by the acquisition of foreign money for application to the existing internal debt, or for use in reproductive services.'<sup>148</sup>

As regards Japan's system of taxation, it was viewed as not only complicated but as having been introduced in haste and with so little care about its effects on the people that it caused many inconveniences to taxpayers. This was due, according to Gubbins in 1883, to successive changes and enactments issued by the government. He maintained that as with other branches of government administration, the successive laws passed by

<sup>146</sup> Gubbins's memorandum, May 27, 1885, encl. in FO 46/331, No. 167, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, June 17, 1885. In gradually issuing convertible notes as a preliminary to the resumption of specie payments, the foreign adviser had recommended strongly the issue only of notes of the denomination of 10 yen instead of 1 yen and 5 yen as proposed by the government.

<sup>147</sup> Robertson to Plunkett, Kanagawa, June 13, 1885, *CR*, 1884.

<sup>148</sup> Report on the Finances of Japan, Trench to Plunkett, Tokyo, December 20, 1886, *CR*, 1886. The Navy Public Loan Bonds which was for naval purposes was first issued to the amount of 17,000,000 yen and later about 175,000,000 yen bearing interest at 5 per cent.

the government since 1868 were not only to a large extent experimental but had the effect of creating numerous and at times bewildering changes. He also argued that as taxation had been greatly expanded, government revenue was anything but elastic. On certain commodities such as sake or tobacco, he felt that taxation had been increased so much that it could not admit any further extension. Similarly, he feared that any attempt to expand the revenue from the land tax, the main source of government revenue, would inflict an insupportable burden on the people.<sup>149</sup> His concern may have been founded on the fact that the great changes affecting the peasantry had not been readily accepted. Following the issuance of the new revised land taxation in 1873, peasant riots broke out in various places throughout the country as the farmers were dissatisfied with the system of payment in money instead of in kind. Not only was it difficult in some areas for the peasants to turn their produce into coin due to poor roads and the absence of banking establishments, they also had to pay the money at a fixed rate regardless of poor harvests or drops in the market value of the crops. Furthermore, confusion often arose between the peasants and tax collectors as the rate of payment varied from one district to another based on the circumstances of a particular area.<sup>150</sup> The government, in the view of British diplomats, had to take into account the effects of the taxation changes on the people. For instance, W. G. Aston, the Legation Secretary, maintained that though the government was quite right in wishing to abolish taxation in kind in order to stabilise its annual income in yen, a few adjustments which were acceptable to the peasants should have been made. Otherwise, the government would deprive itself of the support of the peasants as 'the existing land taxation increased their burdens without giving them a better administration than they enjoyed under the Shogun and Daimios.'<sup>151</sup>

Diplomats also criticised Japan's financial and customs reports. The statements on Japan's finances published by the Finance Ministry, especially those published before the appointment of Matsukata in 1881, were generally regarded as doubtful and untrustworthy. This was reflected, for instance, in Kennedy's remark that Matsukata was more likely to prepare trustworthy financial statements than Okuma, 'his clever and imaginative predecessor.'<sup>152</sup> Parkes was also critical, indicating in 1877 that the 'science

<sup>149</sup> FO 46/302, Gubbins to Trench, Tokyo, September 8, 1883. See also the subject of land taxation in Gubbins, *The Making of Japan*, pp. 99-106; Smith also maintains that the Meiji land taxation was a burdensome to peasants and this is illustrated in the confiscation of land for taxes and the growing rate of tenancy, and in some two hundred peasant uprisings that occurred in the first decade of the Meiji period. *op. cit.*, pp. 82-85.

<sup>150</sup> The riots were reported in e.g., FO 46/167, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 8, 1873; FO 46/209, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, December 30, 1876.

<sup>151</sup> Report by Aston to Parkes, Yedo, July 8, 1873 in FO 46/167, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 8, 1873.

<sup>152</sup> FO 46/284, Kennedy to Granville, Conf. No. 12, Yedo, January 23, 1882.

of finance was new to the Japanese government,' and so, the Japanese had a difficult task in linking present and past statistics. His view was, in some measure, influenced by a report by A. H. Mounsey, who maintained that all Japanese budgets were nothing more than estimates; the revenue was estimated by the Minister of Finance and the expenditure by the heads of the government Departments. The fact that there existed no parliamentary institutions to check the financial accounts, according to Mounsey, also contributed to the careless manner in which the reports were made.<sup>153</sup> In fact, the diplomats could easily find a justification for their criticism in the budget crisis of 1873, since discrepancies between the 1873 financial reports published in London, Vienna and Tokyo had ultimately led to the resignation of Vice Finance Ministers Inoue Kaoru and Shibusawa Eiichi. Parkes, in reporting on the crisis of 1873, observed that it caused surprise and general distrust among Europeans and despite the attempt of Okuma (after he was brought in to deal with the crisis) to explain that each report referred to a different time - that of London to the year 1871, that of Vienna to 1872 and that of Tokyo to 1873 - Parkes maintained that the government themselves were ignorant of the real state of their finances.<sup>154</sup>

Similarly, the diplomats considered the custom house reports which dealt with statistics of Japan's import and export trade to be imperfect and unreliable. Parkes observed that not only did the Japanese custom house not publish full and accurate statistics of the trade of the treaty ports, but the mode of compiling the reports was also below Western standards. The reports were not made half yearly, as done by the British consuls, and the Local Trade (trade between one Japanese port and another) was not kept distinct from the Foreign Trade (trade between Japan and foreign countries). On several occasions Parkes directly stressed to the Japanese the importance of having accurate and reliable reports. In 1870, he pointed out to the Japanese Foreign Ministry that not only would an accurate report make the extent of the foreign commerce of Japan better known, but her importance in foreign estimation would increase according to the proof given by these statistics of the growth of her resources.<sup>155</sup> Similar advice was also addressed to Japanese Foreign Minister Terajima Munenori in 1874,<sup>156</sup> and copies of the British consuls' report on the trade of Japan were presented by Parkes to the Foreign Ministry in

<sup>153</sup> Report on Japan's Finances for the Year 1876-77 by Mounsey, Yedo, March 2, 1877, encl. in Parkes to Derby, Yedo, March 5, 1877, *CR*, 1876.

<sup>154</sup> See FO 46/167, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, June 6, 1873; also see the details in *ibid*, June 23, 1873.

<sup>155</sup> FO 46/126, Parkes to Foreign Ministers, Yedo, August 10, 1870; FO 46/182, No. 189, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 26, 1874.

<sup>156</sup> FO 46/182, Parkes to Terajima, Yedo, September 26, 1874.

the hope of inducing the Japanese government to take additional interest in the matter.<sup>157</sup>

Gower went much further when he maintained that in order to secure accurate reports, the government should resort to foreign assistance by adopting, for a few years at least, a Foreign Inspectorate to inspect their commercial revenues.<sup>158</sup>

However, it was acknowledged that the Japanese were not entirely unaware of the need to improve their custom house administration. Parkes himself noted a few initiatives which, in his view, indicated the Japanese spirit of enquiry. One such instance was an application from the *Hanji* (Governor) of Yokohama to be furnished with a copy of the Annual Returns of the Trade of Britain for the year 1868.<sup>159</sup> Another was the dispatch in 1870 of a Japanese commission led by the Court noble and government official Yanagiwara Sakimitsu to Shanghai to enquire into the state of commerce and the custom house system at that port. Of the latter Parkes observed: 'I do not doubt that if these officers will really devote their attention to these subjects they will gain some benefit from their mission, and will be able on their return to improve on their own lax Custom House System and on the present imperfect mode of compiling the statistics of the Japan Trade.'<sup>160</sup>

### Conclusion

In conclusion, British diplomats' views of the early economic development of Meiji Japan in 1868-90 were generally negative. Whether in foreign trade, general commerce and industry or finances, the Japanese were seen as lacking knowledge of modern commercial practices. This accounted, as diplomats saw it, for instance, for the preservation of traditional systems and policies which were subversive of free trade, for the unsatisfactory commercial laws, the monetary problems, the complicated taxation system and the unreliable financial and trade reports. Equally negative was the emphasis by British diplomats on the inability of early Meiji Japan to do without foreign assistance.

Furthermore, the negative image persisted in that Japan was regarded as lacking the vital ingredients to expand its commercial capacity and industrial production. Various factors were viewed as obstacles to Japanese trade and national enterprise, such as the interventionist policies of the government, the existence of the *shosha*, the currency problem, the lack of capital, and the poor transportation system. Although British

<sup>157</sup> FO 46/126, Parkes to Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs, Yokohama, August 22, 1870.

<sup>158</sup> Gower to Adams, Hyogo, February 29, 1872, encl. in Adams to Granville, Yedo, April 30, CR, 1871.

<sup>159</sup> FO 46/108, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, April 29, 1869.

<sup>160</sup> FO 46/126, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, August 29, 1870.



diplomats did note the establishment of modern manufacturing industries, many of them were either indifferent to or judgemental towards Japan, and were quick to point out that the various modern industries were still in an early stage of development, and that the products were limited in volume and variety, and were also of poor quality. British diplomats' views on the competitiveness of Japan in international and home market can also be said to be generally unfavourable towards Japan. There were exceptions, such as the statements by Troup and Quin on the competitiveness of Japanese raw silk in the American market, remarks by Longford, Le Poer Trench and Plunkett on the bright prospect of the Japanese cotton-manufacturing industry, and an observation by Quin on the Japanese ability to produce competitive silk-piece goods. Most diplomats, however, focused on the problems and disadvantages faced by Japan in promoting its exports or displacing the foreign domination of domestic trade. Similarly, in relation to the nationalistic aspirations of Japanese banks, many diplomats were also skeptical, predicting that the Japanese aims could not be smoothly fulfilled without incurring significant costs, such as loss of profit in direct Japanese shipments to American and Europe, and possible injury to Japan's finances resulting from competition with foreign banks.

As to the influence of the diplomats' overall views of the Meiji economy on British diplomatic policy towards Japan, while their views might have contributed to the signs of a moderation of British policy with regard to treaty revision with Japan in the late 1880's, the diplomats themselves scarcely referred to the economic development or industrialisation of Japan. This was perhaps due to the existence, as they perceived it, of various problems that surrounded Japanese trade and industry. Rather, the protection of British interests was held to be of more paramount importance in supporting the treaty revision with Japan. Only Gubbins appeared to have referred to the economic development of Japan, though indirectly, as he chose to mention the general progress of the country in commenting on the issue of treaty revision.

It is worthy of note that as regards diplomatic advice and suggestions to the Meiji government, Parkes stood out for his direct approach. His addresses to Iwakura and other Japanese ministers on the significance of free trade in Japan, as well as his efforts to encourage the Japanese to adopt a better method in compiling the returns of Japan's trade are clear evidence of this. Parkes's overbearing manner and important rank may explain his unusually forthcoming approach. Although other diplomats and consuls were also promoters of British economic interests, their recommendations to improve the economic and financial state of Japan appear to have been confined to their reports.

Moreover, with the exception of Parkes's report on the mission under Prince Arisugawa to study Shanghai's custom house system, neither he nor other diplomats seem to have stressed the importance of other overseas missions or the sending of Japanese abroad to acquire Western industrial skills and commercial knowledge and the implications of the missions on the industrialisation of Japan.

Of the numerous diplomatic views, some fit the 'Orientalist' interpretation in that they reflect assumptions of inherent Western superiority in contrast with Japanese backwardness. This was particularly so with the image of Japan as basically a primary or agricultural producer with limited ability to develop modern industry. All British diplomats were of the view that Japan's potential wealth lay in the production and exportation of its natural products, such as silk, tea and rice. Of the diplomats, Parkes gave the clearest evidence of an 'Orientalist' attitude. Not only did he emphasize that Japan should expand the production of agricultural products, particularly rice, but more importantly, he insisted that Japan's attempt to develop manufacturing industry was a waste of money and energy. Another view of 'Orientalist' tendency was the perception of Japan as a nation of the East which could not compete with the superior West. Among the diplomats who reflect such a view can be included Troup, Gubbins and Enslye, who were not impressed by the development of the Japanese cotton industry and predicted instead that Japanese producers would not be able to challenge the dominant position of Britain. Hall may also be included due to his skeptical comment on Japan's ability to manufacture silk goods.

Not all British diplomats can be categorised as 'Orientalist'. For instance, Longford stands out for his favourable remarks on Japan's competitiveness in manufacturing cotton goods. Le Poer Trench and Plunkett also referred to Japan as a potential rival to British cotton manufactures in Japan (though not going to the opposite extreme of seeing Japan as a threat), while Quin's favourable remark on Japan's silk manufacturing industry should also be noted. Moreover, Fraser's neutral and uncritical comment on the Japanese *shosha* system cannot be ignored either. While his predecessors were critical of the Japanese monopolistic practice, Fraser appears to have dismissed their allegations that serious disadvantages stemmed from the traditional Japanese system.

British diplomats' views of the Japanese economy between 1868 and 1890 changed in some respects but basically revealed a high degree of continuity. In the 1870s there was a strong emphasis on basic economic issues such as government interference policy, the absence of foreign capital, the poor communication system, the monopolistic tendency of the Japanese, etc. In the 1880s, concern with these issues tended to be

subordinated to diplomatic awareness of the emergence of a nationalistic approach among the Japanese and a drive for self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, despite the fact that some problems came to be seen as less serious, and despite a growing appreciation of some of the economic changes that had taken place in Japan, most notably the development of some forms of modern industry, most British diplomats persisted in emphasizing the difficulties which Japan faced in its pursuit of economic prosperity. Only a few of them even anticipated that in the not too-distant future Japan might become an important trade rival in East Asia.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**BRITISH DIPLOMATS' VIEWS OF SOCIAL CHANGE**  
**IN EARLY MEIJI JAPAN**

The most striking evidence of Japanese efforts towards modernisation and to some extent westernisation can be found in the social reforms introduced by the Meiji government in 1868-90. Not only did these reforms represent the assimilation of Western customs and culture, they also involved the adoption of other features which characterized a modern nation, such as development of public works, modern education, advanced legal codes, freedom of religion, etc. British diplomats' comments on these reforms throw light on their basic attitudes towards 'the progress of Japan.' In assessing them, however, it is necessary to take into account also the possibility that diplomats were influenced by whether Japan turned to Britain or to other Western Powers in seeking models for reform.

**Western Custom and Culture**

To become a modern and advanced nation, the adoption of some elements of Western custom and culture was viewed as necessary by Meiji leaders. One such reform was the adoption of ceremonial practices based on those of European Courts, Imperial invitations to foreign ministers to celebrate the Mikado's birthday and New Year, and social gatherings at the palace. British diplomats' comments signified their appreciation of these changes as proofs of the Japanese government's desire to conform to Western usages.<sup>1</sup> This is evident in a comment by Parkes in January 1869 with regard to the Mikado's review of the Imperial fleet at Tokyo Bay. Noting that such a public appearance was alien to a Sovereign who had previously been treated as a god and secluded from public eyes, Parkes wrote:

His Ministers seem to be trying hard to make a man of him, & are apparently making encouraging progress. Few Europeans however can appreciate the difficulties they have to encounter in modifying the practice and prejudices of centuries on such a touchy point as the acts and ceremonial of a Sovereign.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E.g., FO 46/92, No. 66, Parkes to Stanley, Kyoto, March 26, 1868; FO 46/142, No. 93, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, October 13, 1871; FO 46/271, No. 2, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, January 13, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, January 16, 1869.

In another instance, Parkes observed in 1873 that the informal manner in which his private audience with the Emperor was conducted, denoted 'a marked advance and a material improvement in the reception of Foreign Ministers.'<sup>3</sup> In 1881, Chargé d'Affaires R. G. Kennedy described the presence of the Empress and of the ladies, both of the Diplomatic corps and of the high government officials, during a New Year celebration as 'great innovations' modelled on the ceremonial of the Court of St. James.<sup>4</sup>

The Court was not alone in undergoing changes for, British diplomats noted, society at large was reconstructed. Instead of distinctive four classes of nobles, samurai, peasants and merchants or artisans, Parkes reported after the political reforms of mid-1869, the new system comprised only two sections, namely, the nobles (which included former *daimyo* and samurai) and common people.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the abolition of the outcaste class (called *eta* or *hinin*) and their incorporation in the common people (*heimin*) was also recorded. Other related reforms which attracted diplomatic attention included the permission of marriage between nobles and commoners, the abolition of feudal restraints on choice of occupation, and the ending of samurai privileges through the introduction of a conscription system, the prohibition of wearing swords and the commutation of their stipends.

The changes, though appreciated by British diplomats, only elicited a small number of directly complimentary remarks. One such was Chargé d'Affaires Adams's comment that the abolition of the *eta* class in 1871 furnished a 'striking proof' of social change in Japan;<sup>6</sup> while in similar vein Consul Marcus Flowers at Nagasaki observed in 1873 that the new opportunity for samurai to become merchants was an 'advantageous' social change.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, regarding the commutation of samurai stipends in 1876, Parkes while acknowledging the government's reasons for such a measure, indicated that the amalgamation of the samurai with the lower orders might lead to future trouble among the class.<sup>8</sup> Other diplomats also expressed concern about the effects of some of the radical changes. For instance, Adams reported in 1872 that some disturbances had broken out because the common people disliked the abolition of the separate identity of the *eta*.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the conscription system was more than once pointed to as one source

<sup>3</sup>FO 46/166, No. 11, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 29, 1873. On this particular occasion, Parkes was unaccompanied by any suite while the Emperor was attended by the Empress.

<sup>4</sup>FO 46/271, No. 2, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, January 13, 1881.

<sup>5</sup>He ignored, however, the distinction between *kozoku* (nobles and *daimyo*) and *shizoku* (samurai).

<sup>6</sup>FO 46/142, No. 93, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, October 13, 1871.

<sup>7</sup>Flowers to Watson, Nagasaki, February 26, 1873, Commercial Reports, *Parliamentary Papers* (PP), 1873, Vol. LXVI.

<sup>8</sup>FO 46/209, Parkes to Derby, November 13, 1876.

<sup>9</sup>FO 46/151, No. 29, Adams to Granville, Yedo, January 29, 1872.

of the discontent that contributed to peasant and samurai uprisings in the 1870s, while the prohibition of wearing swords and the commutation of samurai stipends were seen by diplomats as the main factors for the outbreak of samurai uprisings in the 1870s.

In contrast to the emphasis on the image of Japanese women in Western literature that resulted in Japan being romantically portrayed as a land of geisha and engendered a generally passive image of Japan,<sup>10</sup> British diplomats concentrated mainly on social issues surrounding Japanese women, particularly the problem of prostitution which was prevalent at the treaty ports and which affected the health of British seamen. On the issue, Consul Russell Robertson and Parkes's comments were condemnatory, describing the practice of prostitution as 'low and degrading', 'discreditable' and 'evil', while Japanese brothel-keepers and pimps were criticised as 'degraded individuals who are willing to pander to the evil propensities of their countrymen.'<sup>11</sup> Yet they also observed that the practice could not be easily suppressed, and that, despite a government measure in 1873 to free prostitutes from contracts which bound them to brothel-keepers, some women were still pressurised to return to the old practice.<sup>12</sup> In containing this problem, British diplomats maintained that the vigilance of the Japanese police was important,<sup>13</sup> for the imposition of legal restraints on Japanese brothels alone would not suffice to put an end to the practice.<sup>14</sup> While Parkes did note in 1880 that in some places the government had sought to educate Japanese women involved in prostitution by teaching them to read and write and trained them in certain 'female industries with the object of enabling them to regain their living thereby in case they could be persuaded to forsake their discreditable trade,'<sup>15</sup> he did not indicate whether he thought that the attempt had been successful.

In addition to changes in social status, other essential reforms effected by the Mikado's government included the adoption of Western holidays and the Western calendar. These were distinctly welcomed by British diplomats not only as further proof of Japan's desire to follow in the footsteps of advanced nations but, more importantly, because the changes facilitated communications and economic transactions between Japan and other countries. As Chargé d'Affaires Watson noted in 1872, the traditional Japanese holidays of six days each month caused difficulties for both 'government

<sup>10</sup> Lehmann, J. P., *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1850-1905* (London: George Allen & Unwin), 1978, pp. 69-73, 81-93; Wilkinson, E., *Japan versus the West: Image and Reality* (London: Penguin Books), 1980, p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> FO 46/299, No. 73, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, May 11, 1883; Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, March 31, 1873, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1873, Vol. LXVI.

<sup>12</sup> Robertson to Parkes, Kanagawa, March 31, 1873, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1873, Vol. LXVI.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum by Parkes on 'Superintendence of Lock Hospitals in Japan', September 9, 1881.

<sup>14</sup> FO 46/299, No. 73, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, May 11, 1883.

<sup>15</sup> FO 46/257, Memorandum by Parkes on 'The Memorial of National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act', August 16, 1880.

officials and persons engaged in commerce, owing to the circumstance that the Japanese holidays do not coincide with those of Foreign communities.<sup>16</sup> When it was finally decreed that all government offices were to observe Sundays as a holiday and Saturday as a half-holiday from April 1, 1876, Chargé d'Affaires Plunkett described the measure as a sign of progress on the part of Japan.<sup>17</sup>

Another reform towards Westernisation and facilitating communications with the West would have been the adoption of Roman letters in Japanese writing in place of Chinese characters, as proposed by an association called the *Romajikai* (Society for the romanisation of the written language). Plunkett observed that if the idea proved successful, 'it will be, perhaps, the most important of the many wonderful changes which have already witnessed in this country' as 'it will do more to facilitate intercourse between Japanese and Foreigners than almost any other single step could accomplish,' but he was also aware of the difficulty of such a reform since it was 'most radical'.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, as his comment in 1884 that 'time will be necessary to establish such a radical alteration of the habits of a nations'<sup>19</sup> indicated, he did not discount the possibility that it might eventually succeed.

Not all assimilation of Western elements by Japanese prompted a positive response from British diplomats. Watson, for instance, did not advocate the adoption of Western costumes by the Mikado and government officials when he was consulted by a Japanese minister on the appropriate proceeding for the opening a railway (from Yokohama to Tokyo) in October 1872 'in view of the evident difficulty of accustoming oneself suddenly to an unused costume.'<sup>20</sup> A more forthright view was expressed by Consul Flowers at Nagasaki when he observed in 1873 that 'the almost compulsory adoption of European styles of dress and living' among Japanese at the treaty port was 'something which cannot be too much regretted.'<sup>21</sup> Acting-Consul Dohmen was equally critical. As he wrote in February 1872:

...the most remarkable change is the rapid adoption of foreign dress by all classes of the people. The fashions, however, that have hitherto been copied or invented by native tailors, are so varied, and in many instances so ridiculous, as to defy the keenest imagination. This is certainly to be regretted.

<sup>16</sup> FO 46/156, No. 149, Watson to Granville, Yedo, November 12, 1872.

<sup>17</sup> FO 46/204, No. 50, Plunkett to Derby, Yedo, March 13, 1876.

<sup>18</sup> FO 46/317, No. 229, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, December 10, 1884.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> FO 46/156, No. 124, Watson to Granville, Yedo, October 14, 1872.

<sup>21</sup> Flowers to Watson, Nagasaki, February 26, 1873, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1873, Vol. LXVI.

Nevertheless, Dohmen perceived that such a craze was not without some productive results: firstly, the use of European garments made it difficult for the samurai to wear his long swords, and secondly, it would lead to the disappearance of offensive anti-foreign cries such as *ke-tojin* ('hairy foreigner') and *tojin baka* ('foreign fool'), since the wearing of European dress by distinguished Japanese would cause commoners to cease looking upon foreigners as barbarians.<sup>22</sup> Satow was also not impressed especially with Japanese men in Western suits, as he recorded on an Imperial garden party in April 1881:

...the Japanese looked very shabby. Most of the men had rusty old black soft hats and black broad cloth coats & trousers; a more fearful set of badly dressed monkeys one never saw; the women mostly in native dress looked much better; those of them who wore European costume also looked well.<sup>23</sup>

In this context it is worth noting that the Rokumeikan, a modern building erected in 1883 in which an international social club was formed, and which signified another distinctive symbol of the craze for Western civilization, prompted only a few casual remarks.<sup>24</sup>

As with the changes in social classes, British diplomats noted that the encouragement by the government of various Western customs such as the wearing of Western costumes, the adoption of Western hair-styles, the new education system, the calendar, and so forth were partly responsible for some uprisings among Japanese peasants in the 1870s.<sup>25</sup> No mention, however, was made by diplomats of the subsequent conservative reaction among educated Japanese who questioned the advantage of indiscriminate adoption of Western ways and manners by Japan.<sup>26</sup> They did, however, sometimes attribute the social hardships faced by Japanese peasants and merchants in the mid-1880s partly to the speed of modernisation, observing that while the primary cause was the Matsukata deflationary policy, the depression was also a result of the great expenses entailed by the extensive reforms and the abolition of the feudal system, and 'the extravagant habits induced by the repeal of the old sumptuary laws, which under the feudal system encouraged thrift by restricting the luxuries of the lower classes'. The

<sup>22</sup> Dohmen to Adams, Yedo, February 15, 1872, encl. in Adams to Granville, Yedo, April 30, 1872, commercial Reports, *PP*, 1872, Vol. LIX.

<sup>23</sup> PRO 33/33/15/6, Satow's Diary, April 28, 1881.

<sup>24</sup> Satow reported a few occasions that took place at the Rokumeikan, including the celebration of the Mikado's birthday on November 3, 1884. In PRO 30/33/16/8, Satow's Diary, November 3, 1884; *ibid.*, November 18, 1884. Satow in 1884 was Minister to Siam, and his comments were made during a visit to Japan in November-September that year. For more details on the Rokumeikan see e.g., Sansom, G. B., *The Western World and Japan* (London: The Cresset Press), 1950, pp. 388-389.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., FO 46/167, No. 39, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 8, 1873. See Aston's memorandum, July 7, 1873.

<sup>26</sup> Sansom, *op. cit.*, p. 405.



hardships, they noted, affected Japanese of all classes, particularly small cultivators who were forced to sell their lands to become *jinrikisha* coolies, while some others were compelled to emigrate to Hawaii or commit crimes.<sup>27</sup>

### **Education and Military Training**

Education also saw great assimilation of Western elements. Instead of concentrating mainly on classical Chinese learning and Confucian philosophy, the government now placed emphasis on the study of 'utilitarian' subjects such as Western languages and sciences. In addition, with the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1871 and the issuance of an Education Code in 1872, a universal education system and compulsory attendance were introduced. The system centralized control over education and aimed at a high degree of standardization: plans for construction of elementary and secondary schools, training schools in medicine, engineering, commerce, etc, and universities were announced, and regulations over private schools were issued.<sup>28</sup> Foreign teachers were engaged to teach various modern and technical subjects, and Japanese students were sent abroad to acquire Western knowledge.

To British diplomats, the modernising approach taken by the Japanese government and the enthusiasm shown by the general population for modern education were praiseworthy signs of progress. Many diplomatic reports substantiate this view. For instance, Acting-Consul Adolphus Annesley in 1871 observed that the establishment of government schools teaching Western languages and natural sciences, the dispatch overseas of many sons and relatives of *daimyo* and the construction of schools superintended by Europeans by many *daimyo* in their provinces, all represented a Japanese attempt 'to allow Western civilization to penetrate into all parts of their country.'<sup>29</sup> Vice-Consul Dohmen, too, commended Japanese readiness to learn. In 1872 he wrote that 'there is among the Japanese of all classes, an universal desire for acquiring foreign languages, especially English, and other branches of learning.'<sup>30</sup>

At least one British diplomat, however, noted a problem caused by Japan's acceptance of a centralized system of education. Following the decision of the Meiji government in August 1885 to transfer the control of education to local authorities,

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Gubbins's memorandum, April 26, 1886 in FO 46/344, No. 67, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, May 4, 1886.

<sup>28</sup> Sansom, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

<sup>29</sup> Annesley to Parkes, February 20, 1871, Nagasaki, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1871, Vol. LXVII.

<sup>30</sup> Dohmen to Adams, Yedo, February, 15, 1872, encl. in Adams to Granville, Yedo, April 30, 1872, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1872, Vol. LIX.

Chargé d'Affaires P. Le Poer Trench observed that this showed that the policy of centralization as embodied in the 1872 act, which had been drafted with the help of an American adviser and which he thought to be modelled on an American system,<sup>31</sup> had failed to suit Japan's needs:

The wider discretion and powers of initiative conferred on the local authorities will have the tendency to correct the mistake and failures naturally incident to a rigidly centralized system of administration, such as has hitherto obtained...they [the government] have now had considerable experience of their own countrymen, and may be excused from aiming at a higher standard than public opinion will enable them to realize.<sup>32</sup>

Though difficult to prove, it is possible that this comment reflected Le Poer Trench's hope of seeing Japan adopting a British model, especially in view of the increasing popularity in the early 1880s in Japan of Herbert Spencer's liberal principles in politics and education.<sup>33</sup>

With regard to the dispatch of Japanese students to America and Europe, British diplomats viewed this positively, as evidence of the Japanese relentless desire to acquire Western knowledge. As Parkes commented in 1870:

The Japanese are wonderfully given to missions & travelling. They of course waste their time & means occasionally - whether by going about things in their own way, or by leaning to unprofitable advice, but the end must be good as the Japanese mind is an impressive one and their eagerness to learn continues unabated. When they have satisfied themselves that learning involves steady & continuous labour, & that there is no royal road to gain it, & when they have advanced sufficiently to enable them to judge of their own small attainments they will be better scholars. This improvement will doubtless come, & will result I think in their shaking off their old attachment to Chinese Schools, & taking actively to European.<sup>34</sup>

Yet British diplomats also had their reservations. As early as June 1867 when Bakufu councillors (*Rōjū*) requested the British Legation to provide English teachers for the promotion of the study of the English language and Western sciences at a newly proposed college, Parkes wrote to Lord Stanley,

<sup>31</sup> In contrast, later historians attribute the 1872 act to the French centralization policy. See e.g., Yoshida, Kumaji, 'European and American influences in Japanese Education, in Nitobe, Inazo, *Western Influences in Modern Japan* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press), 1931, p. 27. The American adviser referred to by Le Poer Trench was David Murray, an American professor from New Jersey. His task as an adviser to the Education Department was to put the 1872 educational system into operation. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> FO 46/334, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 29, 1885.

<sup>33</sup> Yoshida, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, December 22, 1870.

I have always warmly encouraged the scheme as a cheaper and surer method of throwing open to Japan the knowledge of the West, than the mission to Europe for a limited period of a number of young students out of whose number but a small proportion could be expected to return to their country having made such progress as would be of real value to their government.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, in a private letter to Edmund Hammond in 1872 Parkes observed that the Japanese students currently in England were 'picking up information as they best can, in many cases very imperfectly, and in a way which I feel is not worthy either of them or of England.'<sup>36</sup> Thus, a proper education in England of the students was viewed as important, not only to the interest of Japan but also the reputation of England: 'I should be sorry if we gave the Japanese reason to form less favourable impressions of us than of other countries, to some of which they are already sending their young men in larger numbers than they do to England.'<sup>37</sup>

A similar view was held by Adams. In a conversation with the Chief Minister Sanjo Sanetomi in June 1871, Adams observed that while the exodus of Japanese to the Western countries showed their evident desire to acquire some insight into the civilization and science of the West (in contrast to the 'extraordinary passiveness of the Chinese,' who merely went abroad to make money as shopkeepers, servants, and the like), some of the students returned to Japan having acquired only 'superficial knowledge' of modern civilization. Adams further added that Japan should be careful not to be misguided by people with such knowledge, especially as some of them seemed to have got 'the ear of older and more experienced men in the Government.'<sup>38</sup> He made the same point a few months later to Iwakura, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, and when Iwakura replied that, at all events, short visits to the West still produced a certain amount of good, Adams expressed his disagreement emphatically:

...but in most instances this can hardly be the case, and it is often painful to contrast the well-bred Japanese gentlemen, who has never left his native country, and is distinguished by his courtly manners, his exquisite politeness, and his picturesque dress, with the forward youths who return from their hurried tour abroad in badly-made European clothes, full of conceit, and giving themselves airs of superiority, because they fancy that in a few months they have gained an amount of

<sup>35</sup> FO 46/81, No. 112, Parkes to Stanley, Yedo, June 27, 1867.

<sup>36</sup> FO 46/152, Parkes to Hammond, March 26, 1872. This was written by Parkes in England.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> FO 46/139, No. 16, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 17, 1871.

knowledge, which they are in fact far from possessing, and which it would take them many years of patient study to acquire.<sup>39</sup>

As regards Britain's reputation and influence in Japanese education, Parkes's concern was shared by other British diplomats. Gubbins, for instance, deplored the ascendancy of German influence following the return of Ito in 1884 from Europe, where Germans were engaged to serve in the Education Ministry: in various branches of Technical Science at the Imperial University such as Medicine, Geology, Mining, Meteorology, German professors were almost the only foreigners employed.<sup>40</sup> In another instance, Plunkett when returning to Japan in 1884, voiced the somewhat exaggerated complaint that the use of English language was prohibited in the Imperial University at Tokyo and everything was German. Unsurprisingly, he welcomed an order issued in August 1884 by the Education Ministry for the general teaching of English in Japanese educational institutions.<sup>41</sup> Two years later, in a conversation with Ito, Plunkett emphasized the importance of learning the English language, arguing not only that 'English was the language of the Far East,' but also that to teach other languages such as French and German whose usage were limited would merely delay Japan's own progress in more important studies. He then instanced the advantage Ito himself, Inoue and others had over those of their colleagues who did not speak English, even suggesting 'a good knowledge of [English], perhaps more than anything else, had made him what he [Ito] now was.'<sup>42</sup>

Also relevant to diplomats' views of Japanese education was Japan's new system of military training, in which the navy's training was based on the British model and the army's, at least until the 1880s, on the French system. In general, British diplomats took a favourable view: for instance, Consul Martin Dohmen observed in 1872 that 'rapid progress...has been made in the organization of the army and navy' and he contributed this to the French and British military instructions.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, positive reports were also made by British military officials such as Naval Instructor Lieutenant Baillie and Chief Engineer Frederick Sutton, who, in 1878 noted the progress made by Japanese students in the Imperial Naval College.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, British diplomats<sup>45</sup> as well as British military

<sup>39</sup> FO 46/141, No. 73, Adams to Granville, Yedo, September 15, 1871.

<sup>40</sup> Gubbins's memorandum, February 26, 1884, in FO 46/311, Trench to Granville, Tokyo, March 5, 1884.

<sup>41</sup> FO 46/331, Private, Plunkett to Currie, Tokyo, June 19, 1885. For more details on German influence in Japanese education see Martin, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>42</sup> FO 46/343, No. 35, Conf. Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 1, 1886.

<sup>43</sup> Vice-Consul Dohmen to Adams, Yedo, February, 15, 1872, encl. in Adams to Granville, Yedo, April 30, 1872, Commercial Reports, *PP*, 1872. Vol. LIX.

<sup>44</sup> FO 46/230, No. 100, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, September 30, 1878. See the enclosed report by Baillie, July 31, 1878, and by Sutton, August 22, 1878.

officers<sup>46</sup> were also impressed by military parades as showing Japanese progress in assimilating Western instruction in the organisation and movement of troops.

As with foreign languages, British diplomats were also concerned with the Japanese adoption of the British model. In fact, there had existed a rivalry for influence between Britain and France since the closing years of the Shogunate. This is shown in Parkes's comment in 1866 when the Bakufu government showed a desire for British instruction for its navy to match the planned French training for their army. Parkes wrote:

I have had a little trouble to arrange this point, for I thought I saw a disposition on the part of our French friends to monopolize arrangements that might minister to their influence, and their slight material interests in this part of the world prompt them to leave no stone unturned that will extend their position. Although rivalry in respect of assistance to be rendered to the Japanese is the last thing I wish to seek still I think England should have her fair share in such matters.<sup>47</sup>

Following a query by the Japanese Marine Minister in 1867 as to when the British naval instructors were likely to arrive, Parkes again expressed interest in British influence:

The Japanese are apparently beginning to take great interest in naval matters, & have frequently assured me that they are satisfied that the prosperity of Japan must depend greatly upon its Naval resources...If they continue in this mind, we shall have as fair an opportunity of exercising a legitimate influence on their action as the French with their military schemes.<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, Satow was informed by the Bakufu naval leader, Katsu Awa, in 1868 that French Minister Roches had persuaded the Japanese to apply to the English for naval instruction since he feared that Parkes's jealousy of the French instruction of the Japanese army would lead him to support the '*Daimyo* party' in the struggle against the Bakufu.<sup>49</sup> Even after the fall of the Bakufu Parkes continued to be concerned that French influence might prevent Britain from playing its proper role. For instance, in 1872, in response to a request by the Japanese government to engage a number of British officers as teachers of Naval Science and Seamanship at the Imperial Naval College, Parkes urged the British government to meet the Japanese request since 'The latter have already obtained from the

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<sup>45</sup> E.g., FO 46/190, No. 2, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, January 4, 1875; FO 46/314, No. 154, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, September 12, 1884.

<sup>46</sup> One such report was by Lieutenant Sandwith to Colonel A. Richards, Yokohama, November 7, 1874 encl. in FO 46/183, No. 201, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, November 16, 1874.

<sup>47</sup> FO 46/68, Private, Parkes to Hammond, April 28, 1866.

<sup>48</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yedo, March 17, 1867.

<sup>49</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, August 18, 1868.

French Government a numerous corps of Military officers for the instruction of their army, and if we were to show any hesitation in furnishing them with Naval officers they would doubtless be able to obtain these without difficulty from other Powers.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, in 1886, on hearing of the dispatch of a mission led by Saigo Tsugumichi to Europe to study naval education and administration, Plunkett sought an opportunity to recommend Saigo to devote the largest portion of his time in Britain, and to observe and adhere to the British system. This was because he believed that pressure was being brought to bear upon Saigo to seek instructors in France. He urged upon Saigo that not only was the British navy more powerful than that of any other country, but the English model should be adhered to, since, for the Japanese navy to be sound and efficient, 'a system must be uniform and continuous.' Besides efficiency, interestingly, Plunkett anticipated, as he wrote to Lord Rosebury, that the adoption of the British model would also facilitate cooperation between the Japanese and British navies in the event of Japan joining Britain in an Anglo-Russian conflict. This statement may partly be attributed to Saigo's remark to Plunkett that the interest of Japan, in case of such a conflict, would be in alliance with Britain.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from British prestige and influence, Plunkett was also concerned with the British shipbuilding industry. Though he made no mention of the Japanese tendency in the mid-1880s to favour French warship design, as shown in the ordering of vessels from France and the engagement of a French naval engineer in 1885 by the Japanese government,<sup>52</sup> it is significant that Plunkett urged the British government to impress Saigo favourably with Britain: By doing so, he argued,

...we may secure the benefit of the political impression on Count Saigo's mind by our courteous treatment, and by the sight of our naval and mechanical resources ... our shipbuilders and others will derive the commercial benefit of being the first to obtain His Excellency's attention.<sup>53</sup>

British diplomatic awareness of the Japanese disposition towards the French-built warships was indicated more directly by Le Poer Trench in 1887. In reporting on the mission led by Admiral Kabayama to Europe to investigate naval construction and

<sup>50</sup> FO 46/156, Parkes to Hammond, London, December 3, 1872.

<sup>51</sup> FO 46/345, No. 112, Conf., Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, June 30, 1886; FO 46/346, No. 119, Conf., Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, July 10, 1886.

<sup>52</sup> The designs of Frenchman Louis Emile Bertin attracted the Japanese attention in the mid-1880s and he was hired for a three year period from 1885 as adviser to the Naval Ministry and commissioned to build warships at Japanese ship-building dockyards. See, e.g., Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan 1854-95* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library), 1998, pp. 224, 249-252.

<sup>53</sup> FO 46/ 345, No. 112, Conf., Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, June 30, 1886.

dockyards, to purchase machinery for the use of the Japanese dockyards and to order armed cruisers, he stressed that

there can be no doubt that every influence will be exercised on Admiral Kabayama during his stay in France to induce him to continue the ordering of Japanese naval requirements in that country, and I venture therefore to submit that it would be highly in the interests of British Trade that every attention should be shown him, and that the opportunity afforded by his initial stay in England should be utilized to the utmost in letting him see the outturn and machinery of the various British dockyards and shipbuilding centres.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from France, there were also other Powers to consider. When the Japanese government in 1870 requested that two young Japanese officers be allowed on board British ships and admitted to the British naval academy, Parkes urged the Admiralty to meet the request, unprecedented though it was for the British Navy. This was because he observed that a number of Japanese officers had already been received by the United States government into their Naval Academy and so, 'it would be both politic and friendly' on Britain's part if the Admiralty did the same.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, there was also some concern about German influence. Plunkett, for instance, noted in April 1884 that certain Japanese statesmen were endeavouring to send the young Prince Yamashina Sadamaro to study in the German navy, but that the Admiral Kawamura the Minister of Marine was insisting that as the Japanese navy had always been modelled on the British, the young Prince must be sent to Britain, and 'not to a country whose navy as yet is only of secondary standing in Europe.'<sup>56</sup> When Kawamura's argument prevailed, Plunkett offered to facilitate the dispatch of the Prince to study naval matters in Britain.<sup>57</sup> As regards the Japanese decision in the mid-1880s to turn to a German model for its army, British diplomats, with the exception of Plunkett who expressed his regret that General Oyama on his return from Europe in 1885 showed a preference for Germany,<sup>58</sup> adopted a neutral stance. Gubbins, for instance, noted without comment the engagement of a German army officer in 1885 to reorganize the Japanese army,<sup>59</sup> while Le Poer Trench was equally reticent when reporting the sudden recall in 1889 of French military instructors in

<sup>54</sup> FO 46/369, No. 230, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, September 27, 1887.

<sup>55</sup> FO 46/126, Parkes to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Yokohama, August 22, 1870.

<sup>56</sup> FO 46/311, No. 56, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 17, 1884.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 55, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 17, 1884.

<sup>58</sup> Plunkett to Parkes, Copy, Conf., Tokyo, February 16, 1885, encl. in FO 46/328, No. 54, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885.

<sup>59</sup> Gubbins's memorandum, Tokyo, February 9, 1885, in FO 46/328, No. 53, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885.

retaliation for the appointment of German officers to higher positions.<sup>60</sup> They could afford to take a detached view because, despite the dismissal of the British naval mission in 1879, individual British experts continued to be engaged by the Japanese government as naval instructors.

### **Public Works and Communications**

The modernisation of Japan would certainly not have been complete without the development of railway lines, telegraph, postal system, hospitals and lighthouses along Japan's coast. To British diplomats, Japan's efforts in these areas were welcome signs of progress. The development most praised was the Japanese railway system, which, as Parkes wrote in December 1868, 'will do more to promote the work of progress in this country than any other measure.'<sup>61</sup> Not only did railway tracks, diplomats observed, contribute to political unity as they served 'to promote the stability of the government and secure a closer union between the several parts of the Empire,'<sup>62</sup> but they also encouraged economic growth as they system 'facilitated the distribution of produce' especially in the absence of a perfect road system in Japan.<sup>63</sup> Other actions by the Japanese government to modernise the infrastructure also prompted favourable remarks. For instance, in 1871 Parkes described the introduction of a reformed postal system based on a Western model as 'an improvement',<sup>64</sup> while Watson welcomed the construction in 1872 of the telegraph line from Tokyo to Nagasaki<sup>65</sup> and observed in 1873 that the erection of lighthouses on the coast of Japan was 'evidence of the real progress in material civilization which has of late years been made in Japan.'<sup>66</sup>

British diplomats not only reported on Japan's progress, but they also encouraged the Japanese government to adopt reforms and tendered advice on how to implement them. Parkes, for instance, claimed a share of the credit for the Japanese government's decision to carry out the construction of railways. Commenting on the Japanese proposal in 1868 to connect Kyoto and Osaka, and Tokyo and Yokohama by a line of railway, he wrote, 'I must admit that I have instigated the adoption of this resolution & have aided

<sup>60</sup> FO 46/386, No. 22, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 14, 1889.

<sup>61</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yedo, December 18, 1868.

<sup>62</sup> E.g., FO 46/114, No. 228, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, December 4, 1869.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., Trench to Plunkett on 'Railways of Japan', Tokyo, April 10, 1885, encl. in FO 46/329, No. 103, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 10, 1885.

<sup>64</sup> FO 46/138, No. 58, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 29, 1871.

<sup>65</sup> FO 46/154, No. 20, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 5, 1872.

<sup>66</sup> FO 46/165, No. 44, Watson to Granville, Yedo, February 19, 1873.



them in suggesting ways & means for carrying it out.<sup>67</sup> In a later dispatch of 1869, Parkes noted that the building of railroads and their benefits was something which he had often urged on Japanese Foreign Minister.<sup>68</sup> More generally, Chargé d'Affaires Adams encouraged Chief Minister Sanjo in 1871 to undertake reform, although he also advised him to take into account the need to avoid opposition against such measures. Giving the examples of the telegraph and railroads, Adams advised that the government should not construct too many poles or lines 'until the people realized their convenience and favoured them.'<sup>69</sup> While Adams made no specific mention of how ordinary Japanese were responding to the construction of railways and telegraph, it is likely that he was aware of the existence of popular resistance, particularly among peasants who opposed the measures out of ignorance and local superstitions, as a number of protests were reported in the Government Gazette<sup>70</sup> and by Parkes in 1870.<sup>71</sup> There is no evidence in their dispatches, however, that either Adams or Parkes realized that there was opposition also among some conservative members of the government who objected, particularly to railways, on both financial and military grounds.<sup>72</sup>

In reporting Japan's infrastructural reforms, British diplomats frequently emphasized the contribution of foreigners. As early as April 1866, Parkes pointed out that the employment of foreigners 'would do much to develop the resources of the country as they greatly need engineers & mechanics in the construction of mines and other works.'<sup>73</sup> Given this view, the Japanese tendency towards the early dismissal of foreign employees in their service often elicited negative comments by British diplomats. Not only did they express serious doubts about the ability of Japanese to handle modern machinery without foreign assistance, but they also argued that it was best for Japan to place trust in foreign employees who entered into the government's service. This formed the gist of Parkes's speech in a private audience with the Emperor in May 1871,<sup>74</sup> and of Adams's remarks to

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<sup>67</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yedo, December 18, 1868. Parkes not only recommended to the Japanese government to take up British loans but also to employ British engineers.

<sup>68</sup> FO 46/11, No. 228, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, December 4, 1869.

<sup>69</sup> FO 46/139, No. 16, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 17, 1871.

<sup>70</sup> The opposition to the construction of telegraph lines was published in '*Daijokan Nisshi*' (Government Gazette), No. 28, 1871 by the Japanese government. This was translated by Satow and enclosed in FO 46/154, No. 20, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 5, 1871.

<sup>71</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, March 26, 1870.

<sup>72</sup> The proposal for the construction of a railway line between Tokyo and Yokohama was supported by officials of the Ministry of Finance and Foreign Ministry, notably Okuma Shigenobu, Ito Hirobumi and Terajima Munenori, but was opposed by conservative officials such as Kaeda Nobuyoshi and Maebara Issei and Yoshii Tomozane. Beasley, *Modern History*, p. 357.

<sup>73</sup> FO 46/68, Private, Parkes to Hammond, April 28, 1866.

<sup>74</sup> See FO 46/139, Parkes to Granville, May 22, 1871.

Sanjo in June 1871.<sup>75</sup> Not only was the Japanese aspiration for self-sufficiency seen as premature, but also as a hindrance to Japan's progress since their lack of experience occasioned obstructions and delays in the construction of the various projects.<sup>76</sup>

British diplomats had been made aware soon after the Meiji government consolidated its power of its desire for self-sufficiency. Adams, for instance, as early as August 1871, noted Okuma Shigenobu's statements that

...when the skilled men came out from England, it was understood that they were to train a body of Japanese to carry on the service under their supervision, with a view of eventually obtaining such knowledge of their duties as to be able to perform them without such supervision. ...There was also the question of expense, which would be greatly increased if so many more Europeans were employed.<sup>77</sup>

For the most part, however, British diplomats thought that the Japanese were over-optimistic when it came to assessing whether they were ready to dispense with the services of their foreign employees. Notwithstanding Watson's acknowledgement of the satisfactory working of the Tokyo-Yokohama railway under Japanese management in 1872,<sup>78</sup> most British diplomatic comments in the 1870s indicate skepticism about Japanese capacity to manage the various modernising projects and operations. On the efficiency of the postal service at different treaty ports, while some British consuls such as Consul Robertson at Kanagawa, Consul Eusden at Hakodate and Consul Flowers at Nagasaki observed that the service was well managed by the Japanese with a little help from foreign workers, others held the opposite view. Consul Troup at Niigata, for instance, in reporting on the postal system run by Japanese at that port wrote that, 'Although the existing postal system is a great improvement...I can scarcely say, under these circumstances, that it has secured the entire confidence of the foreign community at this port.' A reservation which might be considered 'Orientalist' was expressed by Consul Annesley at Hyogo. As he put it,

The existing operation gives fair satisfaction. It is to be feared, however, that if the working of the establishment were left entirely to natives, the results would prove very unsatisfactory and prejudicial to the interests of the foreign community of Kobe.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>75</sup> FO 46/139, No. 16, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 17, 1871.

<sup>76</sup> FO 46/166, No. 19, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, May 23, 1873; also see FO 46/181, No. 137, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, August 1, 1874.

<sup>77</sup> FO 46/140, No. 47, Adams to Granville, Yedo, August 21, 1871.

<sup>78</sup> FO 46/156, No. 124, Watson to Granville, Yedo, October 14, 1872.

<sup>79</sup> See the consuls' letters encl. in FO 46/271, No. 61, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 24, 1877.

Similar views were expressed about the functioning of Japan's lighthouses. Adams in 1871 and Parkes in 1875 both observed that despite its desire for self-sufficiency, the Meiji government had to depend on European employees since Japanese light-keepers lacked the experience and skills to ensure an effective working of the system.<sup>80</sup> Parkes and Adams's comments were to a great extent influenced by reports written by Richard Brunton, the British Chief Engineer of Japanese Lighthouse Department.<sup>81</sup> However, it is noteworthy that while Brunton later modified his view in 1876, Parkes's attitude remained unchanged. Though he agreed with Brunton that there was considerable improvement in the organization and management of the lighthouse service, he rejected the latter's view that only a few foreign light-keepers were needed. Instead, basing himself on a report by Brunton's successor, McRitchie, who emphasized the lack of discipline and experience of Japanese workers, Parkes maintained that more foreign light-keepers should be engaged by Japan.<sup>82</sup>

Skepticism also prevailed in regard to the Lock Hospitals. On the question of the transfer of the entire management of the Lock Hospital system to the Japanese, Parkes observed in 1877-79 that since there were only a few Japanese doctors with sufficient experience or training, it would be some years before the plan could be effected. As with the lighthouse system, he drew upon unfavourable reports by British officials, notably those of two Superintendents of the Lock Hospitals, Dr. Birnie Hill and Dr. Lawrenson, and that of Vice-Admiral Alfred P. Ryder.<sup>83</sup>

In the 1880s, British diplomats gradually came to recognize the increasing skill and knowledge of the Japanese. In 1885 Le Poer Trench noted that though some parts for trains, such as the wheels, axles, buffers and engines, were still imported from Britain, the Japanese had managed to build carriages and wagons (which previously had to be imported), and to supervise the lines very well.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, as regards the postal service, Kennedy observed in 1881 that while the report of the Postmaster General of Japan for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1880 showed a reduction in the number of foreign

<sup>80</sup> FO 46/140, No. 47, Adams, to Granville, Yedo, August 21, 1871; FO 46/193, No. 114, Parkes to Derby, Conf., Yedo, August 30, 1875.

<sup>81</sup> See Brunton's reports in FO 46/140, No. 47, Adams to Granville, Yedo, August 21, 1871 and FO 46/193, No. 114, Parkes to Derby, Conf., Yedo, August 30, 1875. See also Brunton's works, *Building Japan 1868-1876* (Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library), 1991; *Schoolmaster to an Empire: Richard Henry Brunton, 1868-1876* (New York: Greenwood Press), 1991.

<sup>82</sup> FO 46/207, No. 120, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, July 18, 1876. See the enclosed reports by Brunton and McRitchie.

<sup>83</sup> See the enclosed reports by Ryder and Hill in FO 46/217, No. 57, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 12, 1877, and by Dr. Lawrenson in FO 46/245, No. 88, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, April 25, 1879.

<sup>84</sup> Trench to Plunkett on 'Railways of Japan', Tokyo, April 10, 1885, encl. in FO 46/329, No. 103, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 10, 1885

employees, 'No complaints of irregularities in the foreign mail service have been received' and of 25,000 registered letters not one had been lost. Moreover, the report also indicated a large increase of revenue over expenditure, and increasing number of letters, mail routes and post offices.<sup>85</sup> Following a similar report in 1883, even Parkes felt obliged to acknowledge the 'general efficiency of the management of the postal service in Japan,' though the service was conducted almost entirely by Japanese and there were only two foreign employees.<sup>86</sup>

As regards the Lock Hospitals too, by the early 1880s it was coming to be admitted that those under the charge of Japanese doctors were running smoothly. In April 1881 *Chargé d'Affaires* Kennedy reported to Granville that he was assured on trustworthy authority that the Japanese medical officers were fully qualified to discharge all duties connected with the Lock Hospital System and that all the Lock Hospitals of the treaty ports with the exception of Nagasaki were in excellent condition.<sup>87</sup> In reporting in 1883 on the role of the Lock Hospital in containing venereal disease caused by Japanese prostitution, Consul W. A. Wooley favourably noted that 'The Lock Hospital system is, I believe, carried out effectively by the native doctors.'<sup>88</sup> In contrast, Parkes remained skeptical. In commenting on Kennedy's report he argued that not only had the Japanese medical officers only a few years earlier been reported by Dr. Lawrenson as having insufficient training and medical knowledge, but that Kennedy's failure to name his informant also rendered the report unreliable.<sup>89</sup>

When considering the British diplomats' emphasis on the need for foreign expertise and supervision, one should note their concern for British commercial interests. For instance, with regard to the construction of railways, Parkes introduced to the Japanese government a British subject, Horatio N. Lay, who agreed to raise a loan of £1,000,000 for Japan. And when the understanding failed to achieve the promised result, Parkes expressed his satisfaction that the Japanese turned to another British firm, the Oriental Bank, for finance and expertise.<sup>90</sup> Satow also noted in his diary that Parkes's endeavour to persuade Okuma in 1878 to give concessions to foreigners to build railways in Japan's interior was partly due to his desire to assist a British subject named J. G.

<sup>85</sup> FO 46/271, No. 27, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, March 5, 1881.

<sup>86</sup> FO 46/300, No. 83, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, May 25, 1883. Parkes based on the report of the Postmaster General of Japan for the fiscal year ended on June 30, 1882.

<sup>87</sup> FO 46/271, No. 33, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, April 1, 1881.

<sup>88</sup> Wooley, Hyogo, April 17, 1883, encl. in FO 46/299, No. 73, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, May 11, 1883.

<sup>89</sup> FO 46/272, Parkes's memorandum, London, May 20, 1881.

<sup>90</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, July 4, 1870.

Dunn.<sup>91</sup> Given the British interests in the railways, it is not surprising that Plunkett in 1886-1887 remonstrated with the Japanese government when there were reports of a German attempt to take away contracts for railway materials and construction of new railways from the hands of British firms.<sup>92</sup>

British diplomats' attitudes towards both Japanese modernisation and the desirability of foreign assistance was not unconnected with the fact that they also wished to secure British influence in Japan through the appointment of British subjects to the government's service. This was indirectly admitted by Adams when he explained to Sanjo in June 1871 that one reason for his interest in seeing the retention by Japan of foreign workers in such projects as railroads, telegraphs, the mint, etc., was 'because the foreigners employed were my own countrymen, and I consequently felt a pride in their conducting these works successfully.'<sup>93</sup> In another instance, in response to a bill passed in the United States in 1874, which enabled American Ministers to recommend their countrymen to foreign governments for employment, Parkes maintained that this was partly because Americans in Japan were annoyed that 'they are unable to obtain more of the offices in the gift of the Japanese Government, or altogether to prevent the English from sharing in them.'<sup>94</sup> Whenever the Meiji government requested British engineers or experts, British diplomats readily assisted by urging the Foreign Office to provide the required workers.

British diplomats also noted the increasing number of German employees in the 1880s. Yet Gubbins in 1885 observed that the growing employment of the Germans 'has not as yet assumed very large proportions, nor does it appear to have affected unfavourably the interests of other nationalities.' He maintained that in the Department of Public Works, notably in the branches of railways, telegraphs and minting, the foreign employees were almost without exception English, while the professors in the Imperial College of Engineering were drawn exclusively from Britain. Moreover, in the Japanese Admiralty and the Marine Department of the Ministry of Commerce, none but English were employed, and there were no Germans engaged either by Japanese private companies or in other places but Tokyo. Moreover, he observed that the increase of German influence was also generally opposed by the Japanese press.<sup>95</sup> Plunkett, however,

<sup>91</sup> PRO 30/33/15/5, Satow's Diary, February 5, 1878.

<sup>92</sup> FO 46/343, No. 37, Secret, Plunkett to Rosebury, March 2, 1886; FO 46/365, No. 38, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 1, 1887.

<sup>93</sup> FO 46/139, No. 16, Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, June 17, 1871.

<sup>94</sup> FO 46/182, No. 173, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 15, 1874.

<sup>95</sup> Gubbins's memorandum, Tokyo, February 9, 1885 in FO 46/328, No. 53, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885. For more details on foreign employees in various government services based on

while doubting whether German influence would rival British in the long term,<sup>96</sup> admitted that they had threatened 'to become again more powerful than they have been of late,' and he particularly noted that General Oyama, who returned from Europe in September 1885, was much impressed with the power of Germany.<sup>97</sup> Unsurprisingly, there were numerous allegations by Plunkett to the Foreign Office, as the number of Germans grew in 1886-87, that German Minister Von Holleben had attempted to have Germans selected whenever foreigners were appointed to government posts through pressure on the Japanese Foreign Ministry.<sup>98</sup>

### Legal Reform

Another significant aspect of early Meiji social modernisation which British diplomats encouraged was legal reform. Indeed, from the early years of the Restoration, British diplomats urged Japan to bring its judicial system in line with Western practice. Prior to the 1871 mission to America and Europe, for instance, Adams advised Iwakura that 'as Japan had now really entered into the path of progress and modern civilization,' the mission should examine the various systems of law in the different countries which they would visit; and he drew attention particularly to the existence of torture in the Japanese system of justice and the bad state of Japanese prisons.<sup>99</sup>

Even so, the Meiji laws drafted after the Iwakura mission were not received uncritically. Regarding the criminal code published in 1873, Parkes complained of the severity of some of the penalties and of the lack of clarity of the provisions relating to manslaughter.<sup>100</sup> On the commercial side, he described the Japanese law of guaranty in 1876 as 'unreasonable' and against 'all the principles of sense and honesty,'<sup>101</sup> while Chargé d'Affaires Kennedy observed in 1879 that the Japanese law of bankruptcy was in

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nationalities, see e.g., Jones, H. J., 'The Griffis Thesis and Meiji Policy Toward Hired Foreigners', in Burks, A. W. (ed.), *The Modernizers: Overseas Students, Foreign Employees, and Meiji Japan* (Boulder: Westview Press), 1985, pp. 210-212.

<sup>96</sup> FO 46/328, No. 53, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885. Among the Germans noted by Plunkett included Hermann H. Techow and Hermann H. Roesler who were legal adviser to the Japanese government. For details on the increasing number of German's employees in the 1880s, see Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 114; Martin, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-46.

<sup>97</sup> Plunkett to Parkes, Copy, Conf., Tokyo, February 16, 1885 in FO 46/328, No. 54, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 18, 1885.

<sup>98</sup> FO 46/365, No. 49, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 18, 1887.

<sup>99</sup> FO 46/143, No. 130, Adams to Granville, Yedo, December 16, 1871.

<sup>100</sup> FO 46/183, No. 212, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, December 14, 1874. Parkes's comment followed the imprisonment for life of a Chinese worker in the employ of a British firm for having unintentionally caused the death of a Japanese coolie in 1874.

<sup>101</sup> FO 46/208, No. 157, Parkes to Derby, September 30, 1876.

an 'unsatisfactory state'.<sup>102</sup> Similar criticism was made by Consul Flowers at Hyogo, Consul Troup at Nagasaki and Acting-Consul Dohmen at Kanagawa with regard to the general commercial law of Japan.<sup>103</sup>

The working of Japanese courts in the 1870s was also, in the view of British diplomats, unsatisfactory. Complaints of delays were frequent and Parkes for one showed no hesitation to bring the problem to the attention of the Japanese Foreign Minister.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, British diplomats also condemned the use of torture as 'inhuman'<sup>105</sup> and described the condition of Japanese prisons as deplorable.<sup>106</sup> As with public works, the British diplomats' views were substantiated by reports of British officials such as British legal expert Nicholas J. Hannen, who concluded in 1874 that 'a Japanese judicial record is untrustworthy'.<sup>107</sup>

At the beginning of the 1880s, British diplomats' views still showed only a slight change. For instance, in drawing attention to a court case in 1880 where the offender had been wrongly arrested and tried, and then denied compensation, Kennedy observed that it did not 'inspire confidence in the system of the administration of justice in Japan.' Kennedy's view may have been influenced by a Japanese newspaper, the *Nichi Nichi Shimbun*, which cited the case as indicating that 'the criminal codes of Japan do not afford one protection to the lives, liberties and property of the inhabitants, and require very considerable reforms to be instituted before they meet with general approbation throughout the Empire'.<sup>108</sup>

Even the new Japanese penal code and the code of criminal procedure drafted in 1882 did not meet with full approval. Parkes maintained that though the codes had only been introduced on January 1, 1882, many alterations had been made, and he critically concluded:

This incident shows how difficult it is to ascertain the real state of the Japanese law. It appears to be changed from day to day by Imperial

<sup>102</sup> FO 46/248, No. 185, Kennedy to Salisbury, Conf., Yedo, October 22, 1879.

<sup>103</sup> See consular reports enclosed in *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> FO 46/180, No. 105, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 9, 1874; FO 46/180, Private, Parkes to Tenterden, Yedo, July 21, 1874.

<sup>105</sup> E.g., FO 46/183, No. 212, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, December 14, 1874.

<sup>106</sup> Parkes's memorandum, Yokohama, July 24, 1873 in FO 46/167, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 29, 1873; FO 46/176, No. 4, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, January 12, 1874, see the enclosed reports by Consul Marcus Flowers at Nagasaki; FO 46/177, No. 24, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, February 9, 1874, see the enclosed report by McClatchie, assistant of legation at Hyogo.

<sup>107</sup> Hannen's report followed his involvement in the mixed commission to investigate claims brought by British subjects against the Japanese government, as representing the late *han*, in 1874. FO 46/182, No. 186, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 19, 1874.

<sup>108</sup> The case was the arrest, imprisonment and acquittal of a well-known Japanese merchant named Fujita Denzaburo. FO 46/256, No. 33, Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, February 24, 1880.

Decrees and Administrative Notifications which are probably only known within the Departments which issue them.<sup>109</sup>

Apart from the press, British diplomats' views may have also been influenced by a report by the British Chamber of Commerce at Yokohama which argued in 1884 that the new Japanese laws based on those of European nations were not ready or satisfactory, and that the new Japanese criminal code was designed 'to suit the requirements of a despotic Government' and was subject to frequent alterations. It also stressed that civil and commercial codes had not yet been drawn up.<sup>110</sup>

The emergence of widespread opposition in Japan to some aspects of the legal reform undertaken by the Meiji government may have also contributed to the fact that even in the late 1880s British diplomats retained doubts about the Japanese government's legal changes. In 1889 Fraser and Gubbins reported the publication of a manifesto by the '*Hogakushi-Kwai*' (Society of Graduates in Law) of Tokyo University, protesting 'against any undue haste in the task of codifying Japanese law' and advocating gradual development and observance of precedent and custom.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, it was also noted that objections were coming from the Japanese press. In a dispatch of April 1890, Fraser observed that the publication of some portions of the civil code (which included the law of property, law of succession to property, law of duties and rights, law of evidence, law of civil procedure) in that year had been criticised in the Japanese press in two respects: firstly that they had been 'copied too closely from Western models, and were not sufficiently in accordance with Japanese custom,' and secondly that 'their wording and style...are...clumsy and unintelligible even to educated people.'<sup>112</sup> While Fraser made no personal comments either on the *Hogakushi-kwai*'s protest or the objection in the Japanese press, Gubbins maintained that the fact that the *Hogakushi-kwai* consisted of Japanese lawyers, who 'represent the most enlightened opinion of the country,' rendered the protest significant,<sup>113</sup> and argued that the postponement of the date of operation of some of the laws published in 1890 'seems to show that the country is not yet ready for them.'<sup>114</sup>

<sup>109</sup> FO 46/290, No. 179, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, December 30, 1882.

<sup>110</sup> See the dispatch by W. B. Walter, Chairman of Yokohama General Chamber of Commerce to Chairman of London Chamber of Commerce to Plunkett, March 27, 1884, encl. in FO 46/311, No. 48, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 3, 1884.

<sup>111</sup> FO 46/386, No. 68, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, June 5, 1889. See also the enclosed memorandum by Gubbins.

<sup>112</sup> FO 46/399, No. 48, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, April 26, 1890.

<sup>113</sup> See Gubbins's memorandum on the resolution of the *Hogakushi-kwai* encl. in FO 46/386, No. 68, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, June 5, 1889.

<sup>114</sup> Gubbins's memorandum, May 19, 1890, encl. in FO 46/399, Fraser to Salisbury, No. 52, Tokyo, May 19, 1890. Gubbins observed that with the exception of the new commercial code and civil procedure, which



While there were unfavourable comments about some of the new Japanese laws and doubts as to how they would operate in practice, the fact that the Meiji government perceived the necessity of embarking on general legal reform prompted positive comments from a number of diplomats. For instance, Japan's willingness to change its legal system was one of the examples used by Gubbins in 1885 when he contrasted China and Japan's attitudes towards progress in modern civilization:

Geographical position renders it convenient to regard China and Japan as belonging to the same category, but it is not a necessary inference that the policy to be pursued in the two countries must be identical. The Chinese have hitherto manifested but little disposition to enter into intimate and sincere relations with Europe and would probably prefer to revert to their ancient condition of isolation, if it were feasible. With the Japanese it is altogether different. Their history shows that they have always been eager to adopt the ideas and institutions of superior civilisations with which they have been brought in contact. As long as their knowledge of the outer world was confined to China and her satellite kingdoms, it was from her that they took their learning, religion and political institutions. That lasted until the Govts. of America and Europe broke in upon their seclusion thirty years ago. The same result has followed the introduction of the Japanese to a civilisation superior to what they possessed. They have completely abandoned the worn-out ideas to which the Chinese adhere with so much pertinacity, and are diligently engaged in reshaping their institutions with whatever material they find in the West most adaptable to their needs. The European creeds of personal and political liberty have been accepted as the necessary conditions of national existence and these are gradually bearing their national fruit in the enactment of well-considered codes of law and in the creation of local assemblies endowed with the right of self-taxation to be followed in 1890 by a system of general national representation. In short, Japan desires to be received into the European brotherhood of nations, and spares no effort in making good her claim to the rank she is ambitious of having accorded to her.<sup>115</sup>

Appreciation of Japan's difference from other Asian countries was also shown by Plunkett. Following a conversation with French Minister Sienkiewicz on the question of treaty revision in 1884, Plunkett recorded his own belief that Sienkiewicz was wrong in reasoning that since Turks and Japanese were both Asiatics, they 'therefore must be treated, to a certain extent, alike.' Plunkett argued that the radical changes in Japan testified to the country's progress and its distinction from Turkey.<sup>116</sup> When Sienkiewicz changed his tone in 1885, saying that 'experience acquired in the Levant is of little use in

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would come into effect on January 1, 1891, the rest of the new laws would only come into operation on January 1, 1893.

<sup>115</sup> PRO 30/33/1/2, Satow Papers, Satow's memorandum to Plunkett, September 24, 1883.

<sup>116</sup> FO 46/317, No. 230, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, December 11, 1884.

Japan, and that what holds good for Turkey and Egypt does not suit the different circumstances in which Japan's progress is placing her', Plunkett naturally concurred, noting that the French Minister's statement was 'a sounder view of the case.'<sup>117</sup>

Another diplomat, Chargé d'Affaires Le Poer Trench, similarly contrasted Japan with Egypt and China. Following an interview with Okuma in December 1888 in which they discussed the drafting of the new code of law in the context of treaty revision, he wrote to Lord Salisbury that the

Western Powers could not but admit that the progress, both moral and material, which Japan had made during the thirty years which had elapsed since the conclusion of the existing treaties was great. Her railways and telegraphs, her educational measures and administrative and social reforms placed her in a position quite different to that of countries like Egypt and China, and the development of her trade when compared with that of the latter country showed that at the present rate of progress her foreign trade would, before long exceed in amount the total foreign trade of China. Simultaneously with this material progress a concurrent growth of public opinion had taken place, and the course of affairs, both foreign and domestic, was being watched by the Japanese public with an ever-increasing interest.<sup>118</sup>

Such views by Gubbins, Plunkett and Le Poer Trench may well have contributed to the British government's policy in concluding a new treaty with Japan in 1894.

As with other reforms, British diplomats were concerned with the growth of influence of other Western Powers. In 1886 this was reflected in Plunkett's questioning of Ito on why Japan had adopted German legal principles in some of its new codes.<sup>119</sup> His desire to see Japan adopt a British-style legal system may be seen in his encouragement of the learning of English law in Japan. Writing in 1887 to request the British government to assist the Tokyo English Law School, Plunkett noted:

I consider it the duty of Her Majesty's Minister to give every proper assistance he can to this Institution, and it was very gratifying to know that, at the moment when the Japanese Cabinet is unfortunately endeavouring to bend everything Japanese into a German groove, as many as 1200 young men should still be found donating time and money to the study of English and American Law.<sup>120</sup>

Another issue which prompted rivalry for influence was over which foreign language or languages would have official status in future Japanese courts and in which

<sup>117</sup> FO 46/328, No. 60, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 18, 1885.

<sup>118</sup> FO 46/380, No. 99, Conf., Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 29, 1888.

<sup>119</sup> FO 46/343, No. 35, Conf., Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, March 1, 1886. See Chapter 3, p. 95.

<sup>120</sup> FO 46/365, No. 46, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 10, 1887.

language the codes would be communicated to the Foreign Powers. A proposal in 1886 that English should be the sole official foreign language was strongly opposed by French Minister Sienkiewicz, who demanded that German and French should also be admitted as official languages since the Japanese civil and commercial codes were based on French and German laws respectively.<sup>121</sup> In response, Plunkett threatened Inoue that if Sienkiewicz's demands were adopted by the Japanese government, he would withdraw from the conference, and he argued that English was not only the second language of Japan, but also contributed to the country's progress. In the event of other languages being substituted for English, he said to Inoue, 'Its growth might be checked, but only at the price of checking in equal proportion the civilization and progress of Japan.'<sup>122</sup>

Plunkett reasoned that Sienkiewicz's opposition was 'founded on nothing whatever but jealousy of British preponderance'<sup>123</sup> since the latter assumed that the exclusive admission of the English language 'would imply the employment of a preponderant number of English and American Judges.' Against this, Plunkett argued that the adoption of English language in no way prejudiced the question of the nomination of future judges and he reminded Sienkiewicz that English judges had successfully administered in various British colonies laws drawn up in French on French models.<sup>124</sup> To Plunkett's satisfaction, Sienkiewicz finally accepted English as the sole foreign judicial language in Japan.<sup>125</sup>

### **Religious Freedom**

The early years of Meiji rule were marked by the revival of Shinto as state religion, harsh criticism of Buddhism, and suppression of Christianity. Unsurprisingly, British diplomats were very attentive to the policy of the Meiji government towards Christians and Christianity in Japan. Not only was an old decree against Christianity re-issued by the government in the spring of 1868 while public notice-boards describing Christianity as an 'evil sect' were erected throughout the country, but the persecution of native Christians at Nagasaki which had begun in 1867 was continued, with more than four thousand people being arrested and banished to other provinces.<sup>126</sup> In 1873, the anti-

<sup>121</sup> FO 46/348, No. 179, Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, November 6, 1886.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 180, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, November 10, 1886.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 182, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, November 11, 1886.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 181, Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, November 10, 1886.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 189, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, November 28, 1886.

<sup>126</sup> For more details on government policy toward Christianity, see e.g., Breen, J., Williams, M. (ed.), *Japan and Christianity: Impacts and Responses* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd.), 1996, pp. 75-90; Ohata, K.,

Christian placards were withdrawn (though the prohibition remained nominally in force) and in 1889 the principle of freedom of religion was finally embodied in the Meiji constitution.

Given their concern at the treatment of Christianity and Christians in Japan, British diplomats welcomed any signs of toleration by the Meiji government. For instance, when a promise was made by the government in January 1869 to omit the epithet 'evil' when referring to Christianity, Parkes observed that the measure signified 'a courageous advance' and the susceptibility of the Meiji government to reason.<sup>127</sup> Later, in March 1869, following the halt to the persecution of Japanese Christians at Nagasaki, Parkes wrote, 'This action on the part of the Japanese government would appear to show that they are able to control even religious excitement, & that they really intend to give effect to those professions of moderation.'<sup>128</sup> While no British diplomats reported on the major dispute in the *Sei-in* over the pros and cons of ending the Christian prohibition in September 1871,<sup>129</sup> Adams noted that prior to the dispatch of the Iwakura mission, some Japanese leaders including Kido Koin, Ito Hirobumi and Yamaguchi Naoyoshi had privately stated their conviction that the prohibition against Christianity must be removed at no distant period. This, to Adams, showed that the government 'might well see their way to removing, without foreign pressure, the prohibition against Christianity.'<sup>130</sup> When the anti-Christian placards were removed in 1873, Watson remarked that it signified 'religious toleration which has dawned upon Japan' and indicated a 'perfect good faith' on the part of the Japanese government in the matter of Christianity since to effect such a radical change was no easy task.<sup>131</sup> Parkes's opinion on the 1873 measure was that it was 'the greatest innovation they have yet effected and removes the principal obstacle to cordial relations with all Christian Powers.'<sup>132</sup>

As to the adoption of gradual tacit tolerance by the Meiji government, several points should be noted. Some British diplomats attributed the 1873 measure partly to the

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Ikado, F., 'Christianity', in Kishimoto, Hideo (ed.), *Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Obunsha), 1956, pp. 188-192.

<sup>127</sup> FO 46/106, No. 20, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, January 26, 1869.

<sup>128</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, March 2, 1869.

<sup>129</sup> In the 1871 debate, Goto Shojiro and Yamagata Aritomo thought the time for the withdrawal of the banning of Christianity had come, while Iwakura and Eto Shimpei did not. Breen, J., 'Earnest Desires: The Iwakura Embassy and Meiji Religious Policy', in *Japan Forum*, Vol. 10, No. 2., 1998, pp. 153; Breen, Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>130</sup> FO 46/143, No. 139, Conf., Adams to Granville, Yedo, December 29, 1871. Breen, however, maintains that while Ito favoured the toleration towards Christianity for the purpose of increasing the prestige of Japan, Kido was to some extent reluctant and believed that Christianity should be contained not through anti-Christian edicts, but through the propagation of Shinto or the 'Great Way of the Gods.' Breen, Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81; Breen, 'Earnest Desires', pp. 155-160.

<sup>131</sup> FO 46/165, No. 47, Watson to Granville, Yedo, February 22, 1873.

<sup>132</sup> FO 46/166, No. 2, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 7, 1873.

experience acquired from the dispatch of the Iwakura mission to America and Europe in 1871-73. Soon after the mission's departure, Adams noted after a conversation with Sanjo in January 1872 that the latter was alive to the effect which the prosecution of Christians at Nagasaki would have upon its reception in America and Europe.<sup>133</sup> In a dispatch of February 1873, Watson observed that Granville's direct and explicit statements on the subject of Christianity to Iwakura in London had added weight to the representation made by foreign ministers in Japan for toleration towards Christianity.<sup>134</sup> Parkes's dispatch of April 7, 1873 went further in relating the liberal policy of the Meiji government to Japan's desire to revise the unequal treaties. The withdrawal of the placards, according to Parkes, was effected because the government had come 'to satisfy themselves through their own Ambassadors of the feeling existing in America and Europe on the subject [of Christianity] and on the incompatibility of their past intolerance with that position among Christian nations to which they now aspire.'<sup>135</sup>

British diplomats also believed that the general modernisation of Japan was encouraging a better treatment of Christianity. For instance, in 1870 Parkes wrote about the issue: 'I am not without hope that in the end it will settle itself. Japan must become liberal on that subject as well as on others.'<sup>136</sup> In making such comment, Parkes may have been reflecting on the debate on Christianity in the Japanese assembly, the *Kogisho*, in 1869, which, according to the British Minister, showed some moderate and creditable thinking by some members. He noted that not only was the proposal for the use of capital punishment rejected by an overwhelming majority of the house, but it was also maintained that 'it was by education and not by persecution that the great end of the religious instruction of the people was to be secured' and that 'the persecution of the faith professed by foreigners was inconsistent with the maintenance of friendly relations with foreign powers.'<sup>137</sup>

British diplomats also were generally ready to believe that the persecution of Christians in Japan was by no means due to prejudice on the part of the Meiji leaders themselves. Rather, the anti-Christianity policy was driven by popular antipathy towards

<sup>133</sup> FO 46/151 No. 16, Adams to Granville, Yedo, January 15, 1872.

<sup>134</sup> FO 46/165, No. 30, Watson to Granville, Yedo, February 4, 1873.

<sup>135</sup> FO 46/166, No. 2, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 7, 1873. Jansen observes that the radical change in 1873 was a result of the embassy's encounters in the US and Europe. Jansen, M., *Japan and its World: Two Centuries of Change* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press), pp. 60-61; Breen, however, maintains that the impact of the encounter was less compared to effect of the policy of accommodating Christianity by the Meiji government. Breen, 'Earnest Desires', pp. 161-162; Breen and Williams, *op. cit.*, p.90.

<sup>136</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, February 26, 1870.

<sup>137</sup> FO 46/113, No. 188, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, October 8, 1869.

Christianity dating back to the seventeenth century.<sup>138</sup> British diplomats were also prepared to believe that the anti-Christianity policy was a reaction particularly to proselytism by Roman Catholic missionaries.<sup>139</sup> In the wake of persecution against Christians at Nagasaki in 1867, Parkes even recorded that 'If propagandism [by Roman Catholic missionaries] could be kept away from Japan a little longer, Japan,...I am confident would soon liberalize its opinions in this respect as well as its commerce.'<sup>140</sup> Moreover, they also accepted the explanation of the government being constrained by political expediency, in that it had to take into account the existence of widespread discontent in the country and the relatively weak state of the new administration. Against this background, Parkes and Adams observed that toleration of Christianity would involve a cautious and slow process, since excessive concession would allow hostile elements, such as the adherents of the Tokugawa cause and conservative parties, to stir up the people and overthrow the new government.<sup>141</sup> Following a conversation with Iwakura on November 11, 1871, Chargé d'Affaires Adams concluded that

The very existence of the government was at stake...Japan has not yet arrived at that point when the Government could with safety permit the free exercise of the Christian religion. ...To attempt to force such a measure now upon Japan would, I think, be hazardous.<sup>142</sup>

Whether foreign representatives' influence did have an effect on Japan's liberal policy towards Christianity cannot be proved but British diplomats themselves believed that it was worth trying to persuade the Meiji leaders that the persecution of Japanese Christians would 'injure their national reputation among foreign states' and 'ill accord with the profession of friendship made by the Mikado's Government to the treaty powers.'<sup>143</sup> Parkes for one was convinced that foreign representatives might be able to exercise influence on the Meiji government policy. As he wrote to Lord Stanley in July 1868 with regard the persecution of Christians at Nagasaki, 'I still trust that the opinions of the Western Powers will be allowed to influence the proceedings of the Japanese

<sup>138</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, June 27, 1868; FO 46/95, No. 202, Parkes to Stanley, Conf., August 21, 1868.

<sup>139</sup> FO 391/14, Hammond Papers, Yokohama, June 27, 1868.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, Yedo, July 22, 1867.

<sup>141</sup> FO 46/95, No. 202, Conf., Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, August 21, 1868; FO 46/143, No. 143, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, November 12, 1871.

<sup>142</sup> FO 46/143, No. 143, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, November 12, 1871.

<sup>143</sup> E.g., FO 46/93, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, May 30, 1868; FO 46/151, No. 16, Adams to Granville, Yedo, January 15, 1872. Breen and Williams point out that while British diplomats' pressure particularly Parkes's, did have an effect on the removal in 1869 of the adjective 'evil' in the anti-Christian decree, the 1873 measure was more a result of a practical necessity by the government to counteract Christianity in Japan. In doing so, the government encouraged the propagation of Shinto or the 'Great Ways of the Gods' and later Hanganji Buddhism. Breen, Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 76, 86.

Government in this matter.' Yet Parkes added that foreign diplomats should be tactful in presenting their views since Christianity was a sensitive issue for the government and the people of Japan,<sup>144</sup> and he feared that a joint formal protest by foreign representatives might bring an adverse effect.<sup>145</sup>

Satow and Watson shared Parkes's view that more could be achieved through friendly arguments with Japanese leaders and persuasion. In his diary, Satow recorded in August 1868 that he was shown by Nakai Kozo of Tosa a draft of a letter to Kyoto, advocating milder measures towards Christians and embodying Parkes's statements, expressed during a meeting on May 18 with a Japanese official, for toleration towards Christianity.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, Satow observed that following Parkes's strong arguments in a meeting with other Japanese leaders on January 15, 1869, the latter finally promised to write letters to foreign representatives declaring the Mikado's intentions of clemency towards Japanese Christians.<sup>147</sup> As promised, later in mid-1869 the government erased the description of Christianity as an 'evil' sect and (temporarily) halted the persecution of Japanese Christians at Nagasaki. As regards the withdrawal of anti-Christian placards in 1873, Watson maintained that the measure was mainly due to the strenuous efforts of French Minister Turenne, Italian Minister Féd'Ostiani and Vice-Consul Martin Dohmen to influence members of the Meiji government.<sup>148</sup>

As to the future of Christianity in Japan, Adams in 1871 felt that there were grounds to hope that it would flourish in Japan. He observed that not only were there some government members who believed that the time would come when the free exercise of Christianity would be practicable, but also that Japanese students who went abroad, especially those who spent many years in the West, would in time effect a change in the feeling towards Christianity in Japan.<sup>149</sup> In contrast, his successor, Chargé d'Affaires Kennedy, had a fairly skeptical view a decade later. Despite the reports of an increasing number of Christian converts at Kyoto in the Japanese newspapers, *Osaka Nippo* and *Hiogo News*, Kennedy expressed doubts about these claims. Not only were authentic facts difficult to obtain, but also many of the new Japanese converts were not earnest Christians: 'the Japanese as a race do not possess strong religious feelings or convictions and...with very many Christianity is adopted [as] a new fashion or for the

<sup>144</sup> FO 46/95, No. 183, Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, July 25, 1868.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 202, Conf., Parkes to Stanley, Yokohama, August 21, 1868.

<sup>146</sup> PRO 30/33/15/2, Satow's Diary, August 21, 1868.

<sup>147</sup> PRO 30/33/15/3, Satow's Diary, January 15, 1869. The Japanese leaders included Date Munenari, Higashi-Kuze, Komatsu, Kido, Machida and Ikebe Goi.

<sup>148</sup> FO 46/165, No. 47, Watson to Granville, Yedo, February 22, 1873.

<sup>149</sup> FO 46/143, No. 143, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, November 12, 1871.

sake of material advantage to be discarded more or less speedily in proportion to its material benefits.'<sup>150</sup> Kennedy offered no evidence to support his view, but it may be significant that he made the observation at a time when there was still many signs of the craze among Japanese for everything Western which had marked the 1870s. Furthermore, he might have also noted the eclecticism of Japanese in the matter of religion, with many adhering to more than one religion, mixing Buddhism and Shinto and Confucianism.

In the 1880s, British diplomats observed further signs of religious toleration. For instance, Plunkett reported in June 1884 that a government decree by which the Christian religion should be officially recognised was under discussion in the Cabinet and that there was good prospect of its being issued in order to provide a legal basis for the toleration implied in the 1873 edict.<sup>151</sup> His anticipation proved to be premature as it was not until 1889 that the principle of religious freedom was proclaimed in the Meiji constitution. Nevertheless, Plunkett continued to make positive comments, as when reporting on the actions of Japanese police in preventing attacks on Christians by conservatives, especially Buddhist followers, and when describing as satisfactory an address by the Governor of Kyoto enjoining the Buddhist community to tolerate Christianity and halt the attacks to avoid complications between Japan and Western Powers.<sup>152</sup> Another event which he saw as indicating Japan's progress followed the official reception by the Emperor of a Papal Legate in 1885, bearing a letter thanking the former for the protection extended to Christian missionaries in Japan and urging him to continue in the same good and wise course. To Plunkett, this 'is a step of the utmost importance in the history of Japan, and marks another stage in her progress towards Christianity' and showed the Pope's readiness to treat Japan on the same footing as other great nations;<sup>153</sup> but when Ito and Inoue then informed him of their proposal to allow the exercise and extension of Christianity and proclaim the freedom of all religions in Japan, he expressed his disapproval and advised them to be cautious since 'the question is one of extreme delicacy and any premature effort to go too fast might endanger the success of the whole scheme.'<sup>154</sup> It is likely that the conservative response to Christianity, as reflected in the attacks by some Buddhists on the Christians, prompted this surprising divergence by Plunkett from previous diplomatic views.

<sup>150</sup> FO 46/272, No. 88, Kennedy to Granville, Teakoné, August 8, 1881.

<sup>151</sup> FO 46/313, No. 97, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, June 24, 1884.

<sup>152</sup> FO 46/315, No. 176, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, October 9, 1884. The address appeared in the *Japan Daily Mail* of September 29, 1884.

<sup>153</sup> FO 46/334, No. 203, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, September 15, 1885.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 204, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, September 15, 1885.



Other religious developments attracted far less attention from British diplomats. The restoration of Shinto entailed a direct assault on Buddhism in the early years of the Meiji period and many Buddhist temples were destroyed, while tens of thousands of Buddhist priests and nuns were forced to return to lay life, and a large number of the landholdings of Buddhist temples were confiscated by the government.<sup>155</sup> While British diplomats did show some awareness of the attack on Buddhism<sup>156</sup> and while they noted the presentation of petitions to the government demanding the return of Buddhism to its previous position<sup>157</sup> and the occurrence of religiously motivated uprisings among peasants in Niigata in 1872 and Echizen in 1873,<sup>158</sup> there was a notable lack of comment on the subject. However, in a dispatch of June 1869 Parkes did conclude that despite the prevailing suppression of Buddhism, 'there are grounds to hope that in Japan as elsewhere liberality in politics will be followed by liberality in religion.'<sup>159</sup> For his part Adams reported in 1871 that the government's attempt to elevate Shinto and repress Buddhism had not been wholly effective, as he had heard that many people in Satsuma still practised their old ritual secretly in their houses after the destruction of Buddhist temples in the province.<sup>160</sup> The subsequent decline of Shinto and re-emergence of Buddhism was not, however, recorded by British diplomats.

### **Development of the Japanese Press**

One other feature of the early Meiji period which attracted British diplomats' attention was the development of an indigenous press. They observed the growth in the number of newspapers from almost none in 1868 to hundreds by 1890 and noted that some were affiliated with the government and some with its critics, including political parties. Such an increase, as Adams saw it, was partly due to government's aim of supplying the people through semi-official papers with early information respecting the

<sup>155</sup> For details on government policy toward Buddhism, see e.g., Hori, I., and Toda, Y., 'Shinto', in Kishimoto, Hideo, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-50; Also Collcutt, M., 'Buddhism: The Threat of Eradication', in Jansen, M. and Rozman, G. (eds.), *Japan in Transition From Tokugawa to Meiji* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press), 1986, pp. 156-163; Ketelaar, J. E., *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press), 1990, pp. 43-135.

<sup>156</sup> FO 46/110, No. 137, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, June 26, 1869; FO 46/ 141, No. 63, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, September 8, 1871.

<sup>157</sup> FO 46/110, No. 137, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, June 26, 1869; FO 46/153, No. 63, Adams to Granville, Yedo, April 1, 1872.

<sup>158</sup> FO 46/154, No. 48, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 29, 1872; FO 46/167, No. 39, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 8, 1873. See Aston's memorandum, Yedo, July 7, 1873.

<sup>159</sup> FO 46/110, No. 137, Parkes to Clarendon, Yedo, June 26, 1869.

<sup>160</sup> FO 46/141, No. 63, Conf., Adams to Clarendon, Yedo, September 8, 1871.

changes which were in progress in the country.<sup>161</sup> Its origins, however, were also traced by British diplomats in part to the influence of newspapers published by Westerners at treaty ports. Reporting in 1876, Legation Secretary W. G. Aston maintained that one publication of particular influence was the *Nisshin Shinjishi* (Reliable Daily News), first published in 1871 by Scottish journalist, J. R. Black.<sup>162</sup> A somewhat different view was taken by Gubbins nine years later. Instead of pointing to a particular newspaper, Gubbins attributed the development of the Japanese press to English-language newspapers at the treaty ports such as the *Japan Herald*, the *Japan Gazette*, the *Japan Mail*, and the *Echo du Japon* published in Yokohama, the *Hiogo News* at Kobe and the *Rising Sun and Nagasaki Express* at Nagasaki. Not only were the columns of Japanese papers filled up in a manner similar to those of foreign papers, the former also drew information, especially on foreign countries, from portions of the foreign newspapers.<sup>163</sup> Whether the foreign press influenced the Meiji leadership to adopt modern reforms and Western civilization, British diplomats made no attempt to assess, but Gubbins was emphatic that it encouraged the growth of political consciousness in Japan.<sup>164</sup>

Compared to the Western-operated press, the Japanese press in general was deemed to be inferior in standard and quality. For instance, in a memorandum to Plunkett in 1885, Gubbins noted that of the numerous newspapers published in the country, 'there are only a few which have any real importance.'<sup>165</sup> The few which he saw as exceptions seem to have been the prominent political papers in major Japanese cities which discussed political questions. Of these he mentioned the *Kwampo* (Official Gazette), the *Tokio Nichi Nichi Shimbun* (Tokio Daily News), and the *Meiji Nippo* (Meiji Daily Chronicle) which were known as government newspapers, and the *Jiji Shimpō*, the *Choya Shimbun*, the *Yubin Hochi Shimbun*, the *Tokio-Yokohama Mainichi Shimbun* and the *Jiyu no Tomoshibi* published by other political groups. The less significant part of the press in

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 83, Adams to Granville, Yedo, September 27, 1871. For more information of the early press before 1868, see Jung Bock Lee, *The Political Character of the Japanese Press* (Seoul: Seoul National Univ. Press), 1985, pp. 10-11. For more details on the measures by the Meiji government to stimulate the circulation of the newspapers, *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>162</sup> Memorandum by Aston, 'The Press in Japan', Feb. 7, 1876, encl. in FO 46/203, No. 24, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 7, 1876. Black's considerable influence on Japanese journalism is also noted in Sansom, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

<sup>163</sup> Gubbins's memorandum on the 'Press in Japan', April 4, 1885, Conf., encl. in FO 46/329, No. 102, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 9, 1885. For more details on the foreign press in Japan and their influence on the Japanese press, see e.g., Hoare, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-151.

<sup>164</sup> Gubbins's memorandum on the 'Press in Japan', April 4, 1885, Conf., encl. in FO 46/329, No. 102, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 9, 1885. Falt observes that while it is difficult to assess the influence of the foreign press on the Japanese authorities, the former claimed to have such an impact in Japan. *Op. cit.*, pp. 98-100.

<sup>165</sup> Gubbins's memorandum on the 'Press in Japan', April 4, 1885, Conf., encl. in FO 46/329, No. 102, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 9, 1885.

his view seemed to be popular journals which had no discussions on political issues and which, he noted, 'are embellished with rough woodcuts, and being written in a popular and easy style' had 'a large circulation among the middle classes and less educated portion of the population.' An even lower estimation was made of local newspapers or magazines published by various prefectures in Japan.<sup>166</sup>

As the Japanese press assumed a strongly political character and was prone to criticise government policy, government-press hostility was inevitable in Japan, particularly in the wake of the People Rights' movement. For the purpose of suppressing the newspapers, Press Laws were issued by the government, first in 1873, then in 1875 and again in 1883. To the 1875 law, a Libel Law was attached to suppress press criticisms of the government. As a result many Japanese newspapers were suspended or fined and their editors imprisoned. To Aston, the hostility which prevailed between those in authority and the press in Japan was exceptional. Since the publication of the 1875 law, he observed, 'the exasperation of the Yedo journals and the severity of the sentences on editors and contributors have gone on continually increasing, and have at present reached a pitch which would be highly dangerous in any other country.' Aston concluded that such persistent hostility might in future lead to serious instability in the country. In justifying such a warning, Aston maintained that while the press was 'a new institution in Japan,' the people would in time identify their interests with those of the press. In addition, the writers for the press and the readers of the better journals belonged chiefly to the samurai class, 'the only section of the Japanese people which possesses much political weight.'<sup>167</sup> Given these circumstances, the Japanese press could become an instrument for opposition criticism of the government or influence the people at large against government policies.

## **Conclusion**

In general, British diplomats viewed the social reforms undertaken by the Meiji government as signs of Japan's progress. Compared to diplomats' views on Japanese political and economic reforms, more appreciation and admiration were shown by British diplomats of the social changes in Meiji Japan. Among the changes which were most welcomed were the adoption of Western holidays and calendar, the introduction of a

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Memorandum by Aston, 'The Press in Japan', February 7, 1876 encl. in FO 46/203, No. 24, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 7, 1876.

modern education system, the construction of public works and the adoption of a liberal policy in the matter of religion. Some changes which were also praised, albeit with less vigour, were the adoption by the Mikado's Court of European ceremonial style, the construction of a more modern social class system and the Japanese legal reforms. Yet, as shown in their general negative response to the Japanese craze for Western dress, not all changes were viewed as satisfactory.

One aspect of the reforms which British diplomats often focused on was the contribution of the West. Emphasis was placed on the vital role of the European engineers and workers in the employment of Japanese government who provided the technical skills and expertise necessary to various modern undertakings in Japan; on how the Japanese were incapable in handling technical establishments and systems without foreign aid; and also on the contribution of foreign editors and foreign-language newspapers to the development of Japanese press. It is worthy of note that in emphasizing and recommending foreign assistance, British diplomats were concerned with the protection of British interests and influence in Japan. This was due to the rivalry for influence between Britain and other Western Powers in Japan, as may be seen in the British diplomats' insistence on the Japanese navy's adherence to the British model, in their emphasis on the learning and use of the English language in Japanese educational institutions and in Japanese future courts, in their readiness to assist in the engagement by Japan of British firms and individuals, and also in the remonstrances against the alleged attempts by Germany to take over Japanese railway contracts from British firms.

In some cases British diplomats stressed their own encouragement of reform and claimed some of the credit for changes made by the Meiji government. Examples of this were Parkes's advocacy of the construction of railways, British diplomats' suggestion for the adoption of Western legal systems, and foreign pressure on Japan to adopt a policy of toleration towards Christianity. It should, however, be noted that by no means all assistance and advice were results of diplomats' initiatives. There are times when Japanese leaders made the first moves in seeking and requesting foreign assistance. Such an instance was a request by the Japanese Foreign Minister to Watson for advice on the opening of a railway line. There were also requests by Japanese government to the British Legation to provide them with British naval instructors, engineers, teachers and other skilled workers.

In reporting on Japanese social change, one area which was scarcely covered by British diplomats was the traditionalist or conservative response to the adoption of Western civilization in Japan. The opposition to the new social class system, to the

educational reforms, to the suppression of Buddhism, to the spread of Christianity in the 1880s, and to the new Japanese legal codes was noted, but no mention was made of some conservative reactions, such as the re-emphasis on moral teaching based on Confucian principles in the education system, which became relatively strong in the mid-1880s and which culminated in the issuance of the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 that insisted on moral and ethical values, filial piety, patriotism and veneration for the Emperor. Nor did the diplomats report on the existence of some traditional groups within government circles which opposed some of the social reforms, such as the construction of railways. The lack of such information may be said to indicate that British diplomats were more interested in the obvious social reforms which signified Japan's progress and the adoption of Western systems and models by Japan and perhaps that their sources of information were too limited for them to be aware of other developments.

As to whether British diplomats were influenced by the 'Orientalist' idea of innate Western superiority, it is arguable that some of their comments did indicate such an attitude. Examples of this would be their reservations about the Japanese ability to operate modern establishments, such as the postal service, hospitals and lighthouses, without assistance from Europeans, and also their criticisms of Japanese legal codes and Japanese courts. Parkes's comments were perhaps the most 'Orientalist' as he remained skeptical of Japanese efficiency in operating lighthouses and the Lock Hospitals despite the moderate and fairly favourable reports by the British Chief Engineer on Japanese light-keepers and by Kennedy on the Japanese management of the treaty port hospitals. Yet, despite his criticisms, Parkes cannot be said to have been wholly 'Orientalist' for he also praised other reforms, such as the modern Court etiquette, Japanese railways, and the Japanese desire for learning and religious toleration, as signs of Japan's progress and proofs of Japan's desire to adopt the advanced practices and systems of the West. In other words, the critical comments did not stigmatize the Japanese as a backward race who could never progress. Rather, his skepticism was more due to his perhaps exaggerated perception of Japanese inexperience; he took the view that given time and sufficient knowledge, the Japanese would be able to manage the systems effectively on their own. However, in making such comments, especially in regard to the importance of foreign employees in the public works, Parkes and also other British diplomats were probably partly influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by their concern with British commercial interests, since the termination of the contracts of British workers in the Meiji government's service would result in economic loss and diminished prestige. In justification of Parkes it should be noted that the Meiji

government itself sometimes acknowledged, explicitly or implicitly, that it had been too eager to dispense with the services of foreign experts. This was shown, for instance, in their hiring of foreigners again, after they had tried and failed to do without foreign help in the military as well as the public works department. Equally important was the recognition, which can be argued to show the least 'Orientalist' attitude, by some British diplomats such as Gubbins, Plunkett and Le Poer Trench of Japan's progress in comparison with the other so-called Oriental countries such as China, Egypt, Syria and Turkey. Interestingly, this also indicates that in some British diplomats' view, Japan was not characteristically Oriental or Asiatic like China, Egypt, Syria and Turkey, and that among non-European countries, Japan stood apart.

## CHAPTER 6

### BRITISH DIPLOMATS' VIEWS OF JAPAN AS AN EAST ASIAN POWER

By the early twentieth century, Japan's image as an East Asian Power, in the view of many historians, was truly established. This was proved by her victory over China in the 1894-95 war and later over Russia in 1904-05. Though such proofs were beyond the observation of British diplomats who served in 1868-90, their comments throw light on the development of Japan's foreign policy, especially in relation to China, Korea and Russia, and they also sometimes speculated on Japan's future as an East Asian Power. In examining their comments it is of particular relevance to consider whether they felt that Japan was orientating itself towards the West or whether they saw it as seeking a distinctive role by emphasizing (or at least keeping open the option of) pan-Asianism since British diplomats' attitudes towards these questions could have had a bearing both on how progressive the Meiji state was perceived to be and on the future development of Anglo-Japanese relations. In addition, attention is given to the extent to which British diplomats gave advice to Japanese leaders regarding foreign policy during these period since this may have influenced Japanese decision-making.

#### Japan's Policy Towards China and Korea

One of the earliest moves made by the Meiji government on coming into power was to establish formal relations with China, indicating its interest in Eastern cooperation. This is shown in the dispatch by the Meiji government of a mission led by Finance Minister Date Munenari to Peking in 1871. On hearing of the proposed mission, Parkes in August 1870 commented favourably on the Japan's initiative as it would establish a formal basis for commercial relations with China.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, upon the return of Date after having concluded the Sino-Japanese Treaty in September 1871, a strong objection was made by British Chargé d'Affaires, Francis Adams, especially with regard to the second article of the treaty, which stipulated that China and Japan would assist each other in the event of either one becoming involved in a war with a third Power. To Adams, while that article might not be construed to mean assistance with arms, it implied an offensive and defensive alliance against Western Powers and was thus 'objectionable and obnoxious'<sup>2</sup> and he did not hesitate to make his objections known to the Meiji government. He told Iwakura Tomomi in

<sup>1</sup> FO 46/126, No. 152, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, August 26, 1870.

<sup>2</sup> FO 46/143, No. 132, Conf., Adams to Granville, December 16, 1871; also see FO 46/151, Private, Adams to Hammond, Yedo, January 29, 1872.

December 1871 that it was a very serious matter, and if Japan were to ratify such an article, it would be viewed with grave suspicion by all the governments of the Treaty Powers. He also warned that in view of the Tientsin massacre, the article might cause problems for Japan: 'A war between China and some other Power or Powers may break out, and Japan may then find herself all at once called upon, if this Treaty is ratified in its present form, to assist China in a war in which she has no interest, and which could only be disastrous to her.'<sup>3</sup> Adams repeated this warning to *Dajō Daijin* Sanjo Sanetomi on January 9, 1872. He also argued that although the treaty was modelled on a Western treaty, namely the Sino-American treaty of 1858, the first article of the 1858 treaty was limited to the United States exerting its good offices to bringing about an amicable arrangement between China and any other nation which might act unjustly or oppressively towards China. In contrast, the second article of the 1871 treaty went further by referring to armed assistance to each other. The best course of action for Japan, Adams told Sanjo, would be to omit the objectionable article altogether.<sup>4</sup>

So aroused was Adams over the issue that he was soon using extravagant language to criticise the delay taken by Japan to eliminate the article. Realizing that his remark to Sanjo still had not resulted in a change, he wrote at the end of January 1872 that the Japanese seemed 'to cling to this Treaty like a play thing or a baby, and must have it - that is just what it is, a new play thing like pegs, or modern clothes, or any imitation of European customs.'<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Ernest Satow took a more relaxed view, suggesting in November 1871 that Japan would not put herself in danger by becoming involved in an offensive and defensive alliance with China.<sup>6</sup> He further maintained in December that although the treaty stipulated mutual assistance, he did not think that it could ever be conceived to mean material aid with men or ships.<sup>7</sup> Satow's view was shared by Parkes who was on leave in England, as he believed that both Japan and China were far too weak to involve themselves in any large scale war.<sup>8</sup> As Japan indicated an intention in March 1872 to omit the article from the treaty, Adams expressed his satisfaction that Japan had finally acted upon his advice.<sup>9</sup> This proved premature,

<sup>3</sup> FO 46/143, No. 126, Conf, Adams to Granville, Yedo, December 7, 1871. In that year at Tientsin, French missionaries had been massacred by the Chinese.

<sup>4</sup> FO 46/151, No. 12, Conf., Adams to Granville, January 12, 1872.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Private, Adams to Hammond, Yedo, January 29, 1872.

<sup>6</sup> PRO 30/33/15/4, Satow's Diary, November 26, 1871.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, December 12, 1871.

<sup>8</sup> FO 46/152, Adams to Hammond, March 16, 1872.

<sup>9</sup> FO 46/152, No. 58, Adams to Granville, Yedo, March 11, 1872. Despite repeated attempts by Japan to revise the treaty, the treaty remained in force until the close of the Sino-Japanese war in 1894. Akagi, Roy Hidemichi, *Japan's Foreign Relations 1542-1936: A Short History* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press), 1936, p. 68.



however, since due to Chinese insistence Japan finally ratified the treaty as originally agreed in 1871.

Another notable change in Japanese foreign policy commented on by British diplomats was the adoption of a forceful policy towards Korea and Taiwan. British diplomats' response in general was critical, arguing that such a policy would only lead to more troubles for Japan. The first such response came from Adams in December 1871, following reports that Japan might invade Korea. His reaction was to remind Iwakura that such an expedition was 'most dangerous in the present transition state of Japan, whilst vast reforms were still only in process of accomplishment, and at a moment when her whole attention should be devoted to internal affairs.' Despite Iwakura's assurance of the peaceful nature of the government's policy, Adams remained skeptical. As he put it to Lord Granville, 'Although there would seem to be no immediate fear of Japan declaring war against Korea, still it is a cherished idea with many Japanese.' Among the latter he included some members of the Japanese Cabinet.<sup>10</sup>

Adams's apprehension later proved to be justified, when, after some debate in the cabinet on the *Seikan ron* policy,<sup>11</sup> a decision was made in 1873 by the government, then headed by Sanjo, to send an expedition to Korea. Parkes, who had returned from leave, held an unfavourable view of such a policy. On being informed by Foreign Minister Soejima of the possible expedition, he wrote on August 25, 1873:

I doubt however whether they would hastily undertake the latter more serious enterprise unless they receive foreign encouragement and I also question their ability, if they are left to themselves, to place in the field a force that would prove adequate to the task of forcing terms upon the Koreans. It is hoped therefore that the wiser advisers of the Government will continue to keep in check the aspirations of the war party which are not likely to prove advantageous to the true interests of their country.<sup>12</sup>

In making this comment, Parkes suspected encouragement to Japan from Russia. In a somewhat strained argument he claimed that such encouragement was proved by the marked desire shown by Russian representatives in Japan to improve their relations with the Japanese government, by the Russian acceptance of the role of arbitrator in the Mar'a Luz case and by Russia's endeavour not to allow the disturbance which had occurred

<sup>10</sup> FO 46/143, No. 121, Conf., Adams to Granville, Yedo, December 2, 1871.

<sup>11</sup> On the *seikan ron* see e.g., Conroy, H., *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868-1910. A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press), 1960, pp. 17-77; Duus, P., *The Abacus and the Sword* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press), 1995, pp. 29-43.

<sup>12</sup> FO 46/167, No. 67, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Hakodate, August 25, 1873.

between Russian and Japanese subjects in Sakhalin to become serious.<sup>13</sup> Apart from foreign encouragement, Parkes also noted a financial motive behind the expedition, in that the government found it difficult 'to meet the cost of the regular army which is now being formed, and also to provide for the disbanded Samurai, whom the Government will not trust as regular troops, and who are cast adrift upon the country in a discontented condition.' This followed his conversation on October 29, 1873 with Soejima, one of the advocates of invasion of Korea, in which the latter maintained that Japan would derive material wealth from the war since Korea was rich in mines and silk, and that although Japan also possessed these materials, the revenues of Korea would be able to support about one hundred thousand Japanese soldiers.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Parkes also anticipated the view of many later historians of the Japanese desire to achieve a foreign conquest,<sup>15</sup> as he reported that Japan desired 'to increase her prestige, and to do something to show that she is really, as her flatterers have told her, the rising empire of the East.'<sup>16</sup>

Given his disapproval of the 1873 expedition, Parkes received with satisfaction the news of the abandonment of the plan upon Iwakura's return from Europe, even though this also resulted in the resignation of some Japanese leaders of the war party. In his view, 'Only an enemy...would wish to see Japan entering such a war' since 'She has not the necessary army or fleet, nor sufficient organization.'<sup>17</sup> It is possible that the abandonment of the expedition was partly attributed to his advice. Iwakura himself stated on October 28, 1873, that he had always been mindful of the advice Parkes had given him several years before, namely that Japan should not go to war with Korea without good cause, that such a war would prove unprofitable to Japan, and that it would not be regarded by Russia with indifference.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the abandonment of the 1873 plan, it was not long before Japan sent about three thousand Japanese soldiers to Taiwan (Formosa). The Japanese action in

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 62, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, August 18, 1873. The Maria Luz incident of 1872, which involved a dispute between Japan and Peru when Japan decided to save more than two hundred distressed Chinese coolies from a Peruvian ship, the Maria Luz, was finally settled in 1875 through the mediation of the Czar of Russia, Alexander II.

<sup>14</sup> FO 46/168, No. 91, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, November 3, 1873.

<sup>15</sup> Parkes's view is close to that of Oka Yoshitake who argues that the Japanese expansionism was a result of Japan attempted to behave like a great power in order to prevent Western interference and preserve the independence of Japan. In Mayo, M. J., *Problems in Asian Civilizations: The Emergence of Imperial Japan, Self-Defense or Calculated Aggression?* (Boston, Massachusetts, D.C. Heath and Co.), 1970, pp. 1-3, 7; Sansom maintains that most Meiji leaders did harbour expansionist designs and such an urge to expand can be seen in previous Japanese history and that this was strongest among the western clans. *op. cit.*, pp. 348-49; J. M. Maki argues that Japan was led by militarists and Japan's military tradition justified their aggressive actions, see 'Traditional Militarism,' in Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> FO 46/168, No. 91, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, November 3, 1873.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Private, Parkes to Currie, Yokohama, November 2, 1873.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 91, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, November 3, 1873.

1874 was criticised by Parkes, especially since he had earlier been assured by Iwakura on November 28, 1873 that the government had no desire to send such an expedition. The expedition, he wrote, was 'a striking example of the want of wisdom in the counsels of the present Government,'<sup>19</sup> and 'their conduct in this matter cannot be said to be guided either by principle or rule.'<sup>20</sup> As with the Korean expedition, Parkes found one cause in the problem of the discontented samurai class. As he observed in dispatches of May and June 1874, 'the real object [of the expedition] is not to punish an outrage committed by savages on Japanese subjects but to gratify a class, - who would otherwise have proved troublesome at home,'<sup>21</sup> or in other words, 'to give vent abroad to the excitement of the Samurai.'<sup>22</sup> What had triggered such an enterprise, he added, was the outbreak of the Saga insurrection in early 1874, which was contained by the government only by allowing the discontented samurai to engage in the expedition against Taiwan.<sup>23</sup>

If the Korean expedition was connected by British diplomats in part to Russian support, the Taiwan expedition was attributed to the encouragement given to Japan by American advisers. Such advisers in Parkes's view included General Charles W. Le Gendre, sometime United States Acting-Consul at Amoy and Taiwan, who was employed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>24</sup> and the previous American Minister to Japan, Charles De Long, whose encouragement might be seen in the employment of two American military officers, Lieutenant Cassel and Major Wasson, in the Japanese expedition.<sup>25</sup> Further proofs, according to Parkes, might be found in the extracts of the United States Diplomatic Correspondence that appeared in the *Japan Weekly Mail* of May 30, 1874, between De Long, Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State in Washington, and Frederick F. Low, American Minister at Peking, which showed that the expedition was under American auspices with Le Gendre assuming the main role in instigating the Japanese against Taiwan.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> FO 46/179, Private, Parkes to Tenterden, May 12, 1874.

<sup>20</sup> FO 46/180, No. 113, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 19, 1874.

<sup>21</sup> FO 46/179, No. 95, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 26, 1874.

<sup>22</sup> FO 46/180, No. 113, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 19, 1874.

<sup>23</sup> FO 46/179, No. 88, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 22, 1874; *ibid.*, No. 95, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 26, 1874.

<sup>24</sup> FO 46/167, No. 62, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, August 18, 1873.

<sup>25</sup> FO 46/178, No. 61, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 6, 1874.

<sup>26</sup> FO 46/179, Private, Parkes to Tenterden, Yokohama, May 30, 1874. Kamikawa and Kimura maintain that Parkes was not pleased at the close relations developing between the United States and Japan. Kamikawa, H., Kimura, M. (eds), *Japan-American Diplomatic Relations in the Meiji-Taisho Era* (Tokyo: Pan-Pacific Press), 1958, p. 94.

Again Parkes pointed out the expansionist desire of Japan.<sup>27</sup> This he noted earlier in August 1873 following a conversation with Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi, who claimed that Japan used to rule the island. From the interview Parkes concluded: 'in their desire to establish a military reputation and to add to their prestige in the East the Japanese government may be induced to embark in an enterprise which at first sight appears profitless, but which may afford opportunity for the development of some ulterior plan.'<sup>28</sup> Despite an explanation by Soejima's successor, Terajima Munenari in April 1874 that the object of the Taiwan expedition was to punish the savages who had murdered some Ryukyans, and to provide for the future security of Japanese navigation, Parkes observed, 'I think there can be little doubt that the Japanese government aim at the establishment of a Colony in Formosa.' The fact that a Taiwan Affairs Commission had already been created in Tokyo, in Parkes's view also showed Japan's design over the island.<sup>29</sup> In a subsequent dispatch Parkes further observed to Lord Granville that the Japanese government had been 'anxious to extend the reputation of their country by conquest of some kind' and that in order to satisfy this aspiration they had looked in three directions, to Sakhalin, Korea and Taiwan, but since a collision with Russia and Korea had been considered too serious, they eventually seized the opportunity offered them by the savages of Taiwan.<sup>30</sup>

Parkes advised against the Taiwan expedition because if the enterprise failed, Japan would either have to face samurai discontent at home or sanction a war against Korea to avert samurai trouble.<sup>31</sup> Even if a war was waged, Parkes maintained that the samurai class might still create a problem for the government. This view was later confirmed by Iwakura's statement that 'war would unfortunately bring again to the front the Samurai or hereditary armed class which the Government wish to set aside and to replace by a regular army.' In response, Parkes concurred and added that 'the re-arming or embodying of these men must be attended with danger to Japan herself. The Samurai were doubtless brave men but each wanted to 'be his own Commander; they might be sufficient for purposes of defence but they could not be easily employed on distant operations.'<sup>32</sup> Parkes's anticipation later proved to be true, as the samurai discontent did

<sup>27</sup> FO 46/179, No. 59, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 26, 1874; FO 46/180, No. 113, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 19, 1874.

<sup>28</sup> FO 46/167, No. 62, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, August 18, 1873.

<sup>29</sup> FO 46/178, No. 62, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 13, 1874.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 66, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 14, 1874.

<sup>31</sup> FO 46/180, No. 112, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 16, 1874; also see FO 46/179, Private, Parkes to Tenterden, Yedo, May 22, 1874.

<sup>32</sup> Parkes to Wade, Copy, Conf., Yedo, September 24, 1874 encl. in FO 46/182, No. 176, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 28, 1874.

not abate with the successful expedition to Taiwan. Following the abolition of their social status in 1876, samurai uprisings increased and culminated in the Satsuma rebellion in 1877.

Regarding other difficulties, Parkes also observed as early as 1873 that there was a problem of subduing the savage tribes because they were not easily reached in the jungles and mountain paths. This was proved, according to Parkes, by the arduous experience of an American Admiral when he attempted to punish them several years earlier for the murder of the crew of an American ship.<sup>33</sup> More important was the objection that China might raise against the occupation by Japan especially when there were already Chinese settlements in the island.<sup>34</sup> In response to Terajima's remark in April 1874 that the Japanese government was free to act against these aborigines as the Chinese had not acknowledged authority over the island, Parkes warned that 'I think the Japanese Government will be taking a false step if they enter on this expedition with the view of permanently occupying some portion of Formosa. I can scarcely suppose that such a step will not be displeasing to the Chinese.'<sup>35</sup>

Parkes's anticipation of war with China was not totally groundless. China later maintained that not only had it no knowledge of the Japanese expedition, but also that the country inhabited by the savage tribes of Taiwan did belong to her. By June 1874, the chances of war with China seemed to Parkes to be rapidly increasing. The tone adopted by newspapers such as the *Japan Weekly Mail* and the *Rising Sun*, according to Parkes, showed that 'the Japanese are elated with their success and are not disposed to relinquish the territory of which they have possessed themselves.'<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Parkes observed that although the active war preparations being made by China and Japan might be intended as demonstrations only, they appeared to increase irritation rather than to intimidate the other country.<sup>37</sup> And in the event of war, Japan would be likely to suffer a defeat as he considered China to be militarily superior to Japan. In a dispatch of April 1874 he maintained that Japan's naval forces were inferior and that the government knew that it could not depend upon its own resources for the conveyance of their men and material to the island.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> FO 46/167, No. 62, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, August 18, 1873.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> FO 46/178, No. 61, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 6, 1874.

<sup>36</sup> FO 46/180, No. 117, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 25, 1874.

<sup>37</sup> FO 46/179, Private, Parkes to Tenterden, Yedo, May 22, 1874.

<sup>38</sup> Parkes to Wade, Yedo, April 13, 1874 encl. in FO 46/178, No. 62, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, April 13, 1874.

Despite the efforts made by Japan to settle the problem peacefully with China, Parkes was skeptical, as illustrated by his dispatch reporting on the mission of Japanese Minister Hanabusa Yoshitomo to Peking on May 19, 1874: 'It remains to be seen...whether these two Asiatic Powers will succeed in reconciling their respective proceedings which may prove to be equally tortuous and inconsistent.'<sup>39</sup> Similarly, when a mission led by Okubo Toshimichi was sent in September 1874 following the failure of Hanabusa, Parkes maintained that unless the settlement was 'flattering to Japanese pride,' Japan might anticipate internal troubles or a war with China.<sup>40</sup> Even if a satisfactory adjustment was obtained with China, Parkes considered in August 1874 that Japan would still have difficulty in arranging the withdrawal of her forces from Taiwan:

The principal difficulty in the way of withdrawal of the Japanese force from Formosa is the danger that would result therefrom to the present administration: attack on the government by its political opponents which might result in the overthrow of the administration; the Government think that a war with China might prove for them the least of two evils as it is supposed that all parties would be obliged to unite to oppose the common enemy; yet war means increased taxation and this might led to internal revolt.<sup>41</sup>

Though the war with China was avoided with the conclusion of a peaceful settlement on October 31, 1874, Parkes's comments continued to be critical. As he observed to Lord Derby in February 1875, Japan, having obtained the concessions from China, might be led to undertake other similar unwise enterprises:

The sense of triumph in which the Japanese can indulge is also not likely to diminish their estimate of their own importance, or to weaken the opinion they have been led to form that Japan has now become the leading power of the Far East. It is to be hoped that this feeling will not lead them into another inconsiderate enterprise.<sup>42</sup>

This, according to Parkes, was substantiated by the boastful tone assumed by Okuma Shigenobu in his address to Mikado on the accomplishments of the Taiwan expedition. Okuma, who presided over the Taiwan Commission, not only claimed that Japan had succeeded in a task which Britain and the United States both failed to accomplish, namely to remove the dangers to which navigation was exposed by the island's savages,

<sup>39</sup> FO 46/179, No. 92, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, May 22, 1874.

<sup>40</sup> Parkes to Wade, Copy, Conf., Yokohama, September 11, 1874 encl. in FO 46/182, No. 168, Conf., Parkes to Wade, Yedo, September 12, 1874.

<sup>41</sup> Parkes's memorandum, Hakodate, August 26, 1874; FO 46/182, No. 167, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 12, 1874.

<sup>42</sup> FO 46/190, No. 32, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 22, 1875.

but also urged the Mikado not to stop at the chastisement of the savages of Taiwan. The latter remark, Parkes maintained, indicated Japan's desire to annex Korea 'which is regarded by the warlike spirits of Japan as another field for the exhibition of Japanese prowess and glory.'<sup>43</sup> Moreover, given the uncertain situation in Japan, he added, there was no guarantee that Japan would never undertake any expedition to a neighbouring country like Korea. Parkes was unconvinced by remarks by Japanese leaders that the government had no such an intention. As he put it in February 1875:

...as we have seen in the case of the Formosan expedition, they are liable to be swayed by the circumstances of the day, and may again be persuaded to give their sanction to a foreign enterprise in order to divert attention from home agitation.<sup>44</sup>

The fact that Katsu Awa had previously remarked to Satow in December 1874 that the success obtained by Japan at Peking over the Taiwan affair might result in the government becoming arrogant and unreasonable might have also contributed to Parkes's view.<sup>45</sup>

In the years that followed, there were a number of other issues which caused friction between Japan and her neighbours, China and Korea, and on occasion led to rumours of war. Whenever a problem arose, British diplomats anticipated a possible collision between Japan and the two countries. This was because they discerned the existence of a 'war party' in Japan which advocated strong measures against China and Korea and whose increasing strength was deduced by British diplomats from the tone of the Japanese press<sup>46</sup> as well as from statements by Japanese leaders.<sup>47</sup>

The persistent problem of China which was intensified by the pressure of the war party may have led to a consideration by Inoue to see the country being defeated by a Western Power. This can be seen in an interesting statement to Plunkett by Inoue in November 1880 that 'the best thing which could happen to China would be to fight and to

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 31, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 22, 1875.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 33, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 22, 1875; also see Parkes to Wade, Copy, February 16, 1875 encl. in *ibid.*, No. 32, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 22, 1875.

<sup>45</sup> Memorandum of Satow, November 30, 1875 in FO 46/183, No. 204, Conf., Parkes to Derby, November 30, 1874.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., FO 46/327, No. 3, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 3, 1885; FO 46/347, No. 161, Very Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, October 11, 1886. In the latter dispatch, Plunkett noted there was an increase of about thirty per cent. in the circulation of the *Jiji Shimpō*, which printed the most hostile articles, while moderate papers that advocated a cautious policy towards China showed no increase whatsoever.

<sup>47</sup> Such statements were by Ito and Inoue to Plunkett in FO 46/327, No. 32, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 24, 1885; FO 46/349, No. 25, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, December 9, 1886; *ibid.*, No. 228, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, December 21, 1886. For more details on the elements which constituted the war party see e.g., Iriye, A., 'Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status,' in Jansen, *op. cit.*, p. 751.

suffer a crushing defeat by Russia' since China 'would never become a great nation until she had been thoroughly crushed and humbled by a European Power. The result of such a defeat would be to effect a concentration of all power at Peking, a thorough reform in the organization of the army and the awakening of a martial spirit in the population.' Predictably Kennedy disagreed, arguing that 'China might effect reforms without the humiliation of defeat and that peace at any price would be preferred by the rest of the world however much China might benefit by salutary chastisement.'<sup>48</sup> Though he made no direct reference, in making the comment Inoue might have perceived that the modernisation of China which would follow the country's defeat would not only strengthen China but more importantly it would also help to maintain Japanese national independence against Western imperialism since a weak China would likely invite interference from Foreign Powers. In this, it is probable that Inoue was influenced by some arguments advocated by certain groups in Japan at that time of the necessity of reforms in China.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of the pressure of the war party, no war broke out between Japan and her neighbours. The peaceful and cautious policy of Japan towards China and Korea that continued into the 1880s was welcomed by British diplomats, and to the Meiji leaders they insisted that Japan should do all she could to maintain friendly relations and avoid war. For instance, amidst strong arguments from the war party during the Sino-French conflict over Annam in 1884-85 that it would be wiser for Japan to attack China before she developed her enormous latent resources and while she was so conveniently harassed by France, Plunkett advised 'extreme prudence and a continuation of the policy of doing nothing as long as possible.'<sup>50</sup> 'Japan,' he said to Foreign Minister Inoue, 'should not be in a hurry to take any independent line of her own,' but should follow the conduct adopted by other Western Powers, particularly Britain.<sup>51</sup> Nor should Japan align itself with France against China.<sup>52</sup> Plunkett was aware that France had made some overtures to the Japanese government,<sup>53</sup> and although the government maintained that they had no wish to join France against China, Plunkett in later dispatches to London questioned the visit by two Japanese officers, Rear-Admiral Kabayama and Lieutenant-General

<sup>48</sup> FO 46/258, No. 175, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, November 8, 1880.

<sup>49</sup> See details of the arguments in Yoshitake, *op. cit.*, in Mayo, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>50</sup> FO 46/315, No. 180, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, October 16, 1884.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 187, Very Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, October 21, 1884.

<sup>52</sup> FO 46/327, No. 32, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 24, 1885.

<sup>53</sup> FO 46/317, No. 251A, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, December 24, 1884. Not only did he hear from Vice-Foreign Minister Yoshida Kiyonari that the French Ambassador at Berlin had proposed the Japanese Minister there to join France in an alliance against China, but also that indirect proposals had persistently been made by a French officer in the Japanese service. The same proposal had also been made by Jules Patenotre, the French Minister in China to Ando Taro, the Japanese Consul General at Shanghai.



Takashima, to Shanghai while the French Minister who had made the advance to Japan was there.<sup>54</sup> Despite his apprehensions, however, no alliance was formed between France and Japan against China.

In explaining the policy of Japan, British diplomats noted several factors. Financially, the Meiji leaders admitted that Japan could ill afford a large-scale war. For instance, Iwakura told Parkes on September 11, 1874, that war with China over Taiwan, 'although it might gratify certain classes in Japan...would be disapproved [of] by all sensible men, and that the finances of the country would not admit of a protracted contest.'<sup>55</sup> Katsu Awa, who resigned as Naval Minister in protest against the risking of war with China, also confessed to Satow on November 26, 1874 that 'Japan had no treasure to pay for the expenses of a war, and it would be impossible to raise money except by forced loans from the people, or fresh issues of paper money, which would be an injury to the country.'<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in 1885, Plunkett reported to Granville that the Japanese Foreign Ministry acknowledged that Japan was in no position to incur the expenditure of a war.<sup>57</sup> In Japan's relations with Korea Parkes, for instance, noted in October 1875 regarding the Unyokan incident: 'the Japanese Government are not disposed to engage in war with Corea, if this can be reasonably avoided. They dread the heavy expenditure which it would entail'<sup>58</sup> and in 1878, he reiterated that 'financial considerations' had materially influenced the Japanese government 'in pursuing an amicable policy with Corea.'<sup>59</sup>

Just as they recognised the financial restraints on Japan in waging a war against China, the Meiji leaders, according to British diplomats, also respected Chinese strength. For instance, Le Poer Trench, noting a statement in a semi-official newspaper in 1883 on the growing strength of China and the comparative weakness of Japan, stated that 'The admission of Japan's inability to cope successfully with her powerful neighbour is not a new idea' in the country.<sup>60</sup> In February 1884, when Ito said that Japan would send only

<sup>54</sup> FO 46/327, No. 11, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 16, 1885; FO 46/327, No. 12, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 16, 1885. For more details on the possible Franco-Japanese alliance in 1883-85, see Sims, *French Policy*, pp. 119-142.

<sup>55</sup> FO 46/182, No. 169, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 12, 1874.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum of Satow, November 30, 1875 in FO 46/183, No. 204, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, November 30, 1874. Katsu Awa added that there was also a proposal to economize by diminishing the number of government officials in order to finance the war, which he opposed as a contemptible proceeding.

<sup>57</sup> FO 46/327, No. 22, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 19, 1885.

<sup>58</sup> FO 46/194, No. 139, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 11, 1875.

<sup>59</sup> FO 46/231, No. 139, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, December 18, 1878.

<sup>60</sup> FO 46/302, No. 138, Trench to Granville, Tokyo, September 25, 1883. It was an article in the *Meiji Nippo* of September 23, 1883, which was subsidised by the Japanese government.

one warship to Shanghai for the purpose of protecting foreign subjects in the city amidst the ongoing conflict between China and France, Le Poer Trench wrote:

I could see, however, that the Government were disinclined to take any step likely to give offence to their powerful neighbour, and no doubt the report which comes from Peking that China means, when she has her hands free, to assert her claim to sovereignty over the Likiu (Loochoo) Islands, accounts to a great extent for the hesitation shown by Japan to do anything which might give China a pretext for re-opening a question so fraught with danger to the friendly relations now existing between the two countries.<sup>61</sup>

Such a perception corresponded with British diplomats' views of the superior military strength of China. In February 1881, Kennedy observed that 'China was rich and powerful as compared with Japan,'<sup>62</sup> and Plunkett, in commenting on the possible conflict with China over Korea in 1884 wrote:

...how very unwise I consider them for allowing the War Party to drag them into a conflict with the Big neighbor [sic], who, however weak she may be now, and however much she may temporarily be hampered by France, will one day be a great Power, who will then pay Japan off with interest for any victory which the latter may now get over her.<sup>63</sup>

When Parkes observed in a telegram from Peking in January 1885 that Japan had no ground for making war against China and was incapable of maintaining a large force in the field for a lengthy period, and warned that France was making China a military nation, Plunkett readily agreed: 'how utterly foolish it would be of Japan to provoke the hostility of her powerful neighbour.'<sup>64</sup>

British diplomats also noted other factors which influenced the foreign policy of Japan, particularly in the 1880s. In March 1880 Kennedy was informed by Inoue that Japan would not get involved in a war with China because she had to deal with the question of treaty revision and also the agitation for representative institutions, which gave 'no little trouble to the present government.' The latter question alone, Inoue explained, 'would suffice to prevent Japan going to war. As soon as this country became involved in difficulties, or in war with another country the agitators for representative government would avail themselves of the opportunity to press their demand.'<sup>65</sup>

<sup>61</sup> FO 46/310, No. 15, Conf., Trench to Granville, Tokyo, February 8, 1884. Japan, however, later decided to send a few ships to Shanghai some time after the meeting between Ito and Le Poer Trench.

<sup>62</sup> FO 46/271, No. 21, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, February 23, 1881.

<sup>63</sup> FO 46/317, No. 258, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, December 31, 1884.

<sup>64</sup> FO 46/327, No. 22, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 19, 1885.

<sup>65</sup> FO 46/256, No. 55, Conf., Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, March 25, 1880.

Equally important, according to British diplomats, was the influence exerted by Ito and Inoue. Known as the peace or anti-war party, Ito and Inoue advocated a peaceful settlement of various differences that arose between Japan and China. Ito told Kennedy in 1881 that despite the unceasing difficulty over the Ryukyus, Japan's earnest desire was to obtain and keep the friendship of China.<sup>66</sup> Following the dispute over Korea, Parkes reported in 1883 that Inoue strongly deprecated collision with China and invariably endeavoured to suppress such an idea whenever it found expression either among Japanese officials or the people.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps a more obvious statement was by Plunkett in 1885 with regard to the peaceful settlement of a dispute over Korea: 'The feelings [of the war party] if not for the prudence and energy of Inoue and Ito would have certainly have led to a war with China.'<sup>68</sup> Looking back in 1886 at the speculation about a French-Japanese alliance, Plunkett observed that Inoue and Ito had done all they could to maintain a peaceful policy towards China and both had no desire to join France against China.<sup>69</sup>

British diplomats noted that the Meiji leaders also realised that Russia had long sought a good open harbour on the Pacific, and that they felt that conflict with China or Korea would inevitably lead to an intervention from Russia. In 1882 Inoue told Parkes that in view of the increasing strength of Russia at Vladivostok on the Korean border, she would probably take possession of the Korean ports of Gensan and Fusan if war broke out between China and Japan.<sup>70</sup> In October 1886 Ito emphasized to Plunkett his strong desire to maintain friendly relations with China; he was anxious about the Chinese designs in Korea and preferred to see Korea continue independent, 'but that of the two evils he would sooner see her belong to China than fall a prey to Russia.'<sup>71</sup> Two months later, Inoue confessed to Plunkett his anxiety that a war between Japan and China would not only afford a pretext for Russia to enter Korea, but also force Britain to take up the cause of China in response to the move by Russia. This would lead only to disadvantages for Japan.<sup>72</sup> Of course such a view of possible Russian intervention was recognised by British diplomats and they often used it in reminding the Meiji leaders to avoid war with China or Korea.<sup>73</sup> Besides, as expressed by Plunkett, possession of an area on either the

<sup>66</sup> FO 46/272, No. 49, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, May 14, 1881.

<sup>67</sup> FO 46/297, No. 26, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, February 17, 1883.

<sup>68</sup> FO 46/331, No. 155, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, June 3, 1885.

<sup>69</sup> FO 46/347, No. 161, Very Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, October 11, 1886.

<sup>70</sup> FO 46/288, No. 128, Secret, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, September 12, 1882.

<sup>71</sup> FO 46/347, No. 161, Conf, Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, October 11, 1886.

<sup>72</sup> FO 46/349, No. 212, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, December 10, 1886.

<sup>73</sup> E.g., FO 46/192, No. 94, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, July 24, 1875; FO 46/349, No. 25, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, December 9, 1886.

Korean or the Chinese frontier by Russia, which would give the Power 'a position in the Japan and China seas' would not only be dangerous to the conflicting parties, but also 'very disadvantageous to our [British] interests.'<sup>74</sup>

In fact, it was the threat of Russia that in the view of British diplomats explained the Japanese assistance to Korea in becoming a modern independent nation. They observed that Japan had not only encouraged Korea to adopt modern reforms by inviting Korean missions to observe Japan's progress,<sup>75</sup> but more importantly, persuaded Korea 'to establish relations with Western Powers. They also based their opinion on statements by Japanese leaders, such as Iwakura to Parkes in 1875 and Inoue to Kennedy in 1880, that only by ensuring Korean independence through new relations with other Powers, could Russian designs be thwarted.'<sup>76</sup> Such a policy was supported by British diplomats since they were also concerned about the Russian threat in East Asia. In 1876, Parkes impressed upon Foreign Minister Terajima Munenari that he and the Japanese government were at one in their belief in the desirability of Korea maintaining her independence, and that in order to ensure this, Japan should persuade Korea to enter into relations with Western Powers.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, when a conflict loomed between China and Russia in 1880 over the Ili region, Kennedy perceived that 'unless Korea be permanently opened to foreign trade within a short time by the conclusion of Treaties of Commerce with Europe and with America, she is destined to be annexed to the Russian Asiatic possession.'<sup>78</sup> In a later dispatch Kennedy observed that although Korea would not be of much importance to Britain economically, in view of probable Sino-Russo conflict 'it has acquired a political importance for all nations trading in the Far East.'<sup>79</sup>

By the mid-1880s, British diplomats were noting that while Japan's foreign policy aimed to maintain friendly relations with the West, it also showed a gradual tendency towards pan-Asianism, or an Eastern alliance between Japan and China or between Japan, China and Korea.<sup>80</sup> As with the earlier Japanese interest in Eastern cooperation with China in the Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1871, such an idea was generally opposed by

<sup>74</sup> FO 46/329, No. 87, Very Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, March 31, 1885.

<sup>75</sup> Kennedy and Satow reported that the Korean mission to Japan in 1881 had chiefly been occupied in visiting the various government establishments, such as administrative departments, arsenals, factories, and schools. FO 46/272, No. 61, Very Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, June 8, 1881. See memorandum by Satow, May 11, 1881.

<sup>76</sup> FO 46/191, No. 49, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 5, 1875; FO 46/258, No. 146, Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, September 3, 1880.

<sup>77</sup> FO 46/206, No. 102, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 9, 1876.

<sup>78</sup> FO 46/257, No. 113, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, June 29, 1880.

<sup>79</sup> FO 46/258, No. 179, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, November 21, 1880.

<sup>80</sup> See Oka in Mayo, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6 for debates in Japan on Eastern cooperation; Sims maintains that French legal adviser in the government service, Boissonade de Fontarabie, was partly responsible for promoting a Japanese-Chinese-Korean alliance to the Meiji leadership, Sims, *French Policy*, p. 267.

British diplomats for it posed a threat to Western interests in East Asia. One of the earliest comments in this connection was by Satow in September 1883. In recommending a more conciliatory attitude by Britain towards Japan in relation to treaty revision, he wrote:

The formation of an Eastern Asiatic League between China, Japan and Korea has been more than once suggested, and is regarded with a certain degree of favour by Japanese statesmen who have begun to despair of obtaining what they consider due recognition of their claims from European powers. The idea may seem chimerical and incapable of practical realization, but if such a policy were to be seriously pursued by Japan, it is evident that the effect would be the reverse of advantageous to the interests of European commerce in the extreme East.<sup>81</sup>

In alluding to alliance between China, Korea and Japan, it is probable that Satow was prompted by Iwakura's reported statement in 1880 to a Korean visitor, that he had long desired to induce Korea into an alliance of the three eastern Powers, but that the anti-foreign feeling there was so great that he thought it would not be successful.<sup>82</sup> In the following year Plunkett recorded that while Inoue expressed his desire to follow the conduct of other Western Powers, especially Britain, in relation to the Sino-French conflict, 'the slow and unsatisfactory manner in which the French were carrying on their operations against China, threatened to have the effect of developing a lurking sympathy in favour of China.'<sup>83</sup> He added that though he thought the feeling was not yet shared by Inoue, 'who recognized that Japan having broken with the East, had most to hope from an open profession of friendship with the West,' there were symptoms of such a feeling increasing in other quarters. Plunkett's position indicated some apprehension of possible Sino-Japanese cooperation as he stated that such sympathy might 'unfortunately acquire strength, if France delays much longer striking some decidedly successful blow.'<sup>84</sup>

Apart from the Japanese frustration with treaty revision and France's unimpressive performance in China, the general renewed drive for colonial expansion and imperialist rivalries among European nations in the mid-1880s, in British diplomats'

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<sup>81</sup> PRO 30/33/1/2, Satow Papers, memorandum by Satow to Plunkett, September 24, 1883.

<sup>82</sup> PRO 30/33/15/6, Satow's Diary, November 17, 1880; Oka notes that Iwakura's position towards a closer cooperation between Japan and China can be seen in his memorandum of October 1882, in which he argued that unless the two countries acted together, it would be impossible to prevent the 'eastern advance of Western power' and that Japan should not risk war with China over Korea since it would bring no benefit to Japan and result only in more advantages to European traders. Quoted in Oka Yoshitake, in Mayo, *op. cit.* pp. 4, 6.

<sup>83</sup> FO 46/315, No. 187, Very Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, October 21, 1884.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 188, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, October 21, 1884.

view, also contributed to the idea of pan-Asianism in Japan.<sup>85</sup> This development, it was observed in 1885, counterbalanced or at least held in check the hostility to China which was growing in some quarters and led the Meiji government to attach more value to friendly relations with China. Confirmation of this view came from Inoue's acknowledgement to Plunkett in June 1885 of Japanese anxiety that a race for colonies among the Western Powers in order to divert the attention of their people from issues in Europe might result in great troubles for Asiatic countries, and that a war with China would weaken Japan and might even lead to Japan's annexation by Western Powers. Plunkett consequently concluded that the presence of Ito at that time at Tientsin to settle the Korean problem was intended to 'lay a foundation for a tolerably good understanding between China and Japan for mutual protection from the aggressive Powers of the West.' The first visible result of this, he predicted, would be the withdrawal of Japan from Korea, and 'the return of that country, with the consent, and even perhaps the connivance of Japan, more and more under the dominating influence of China.'<sup>86</sup> Apart from Plunkett, Gubbins also reported in February 1885 the emergence in Japan of what he called an 'Eastern Coalition', noting that the idea had weight in some influential quarters. Yet he added that the idea was generally opposed by Japanese press, which argued that 'the helpless condition of China and Corea leave her [Japan] no alternative but to throw in her lot on the side of Western Nations and so realize her ambition to be the leading power in Eastern Asia.'<sup>87</sup> Unlike Plunkett who indicated some apprehension at the prospect of an Eastern alliance between Japan and China, Gubbins's own position in the memorandum was neutral in that he merely repeated some reasons given by its opponents for rejecting such an alliance with China.

It is clear that by 1887 some form of East Asian cooperation was being seriously considered by the Meiji government, as Inoue put to Plunkett in March of that year a suggestion for a tripartite alliance between China, Japan and Britain. Such an alliance, according to Inoue, would not only place the relations of China and Japan upon a friendly and permanent understanding but also constitute a united front against the aggrandisement of Russia. Plunkett's response was to reject the idea by replying that 'the results might be obtained by means far simpler than a tripartite secret arrangement,' and

<sup>85</sup> In 1881 France established a protectorate over Tunis; in 1882 Britain occupied Egypt; in 1883 Germany colonized South-western Africa; in 1884-85 France extended her protectorate over Indochina and Britain took Burma; in 1885 France and Britain occupied Taiwan and Port Hamilton respectively. See Iriye, in Jansen, *Cambridge History*, p. 747.

<sup>86</sup> FO 46/331, No. 155, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, June 3, 1885.

<sup>87</sup> Gubbins's memorandum, 'Public Opinion in regard to Japan's Future Policy,' February 17, 1885 encl. in FO 46/328, No. 55, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 18, 1885.

he proposed instead that the controversial issues between China and Japan be settled by compromise.<sup>88</sup> Though he was not explicit, Plunkett may have considered that even with the association of Britain, close cooperation between the two Eastern countries was undesirable as it portended a united resistance against Western Powers. As to whether the idea of a Eastern coalition was seen as non-progressive on the part of Japan, no such view was expressed by British diplomats, though Satow and Plunkett did indicate their apprehension. Gubbins also made no personal statement on the issue, although he did restate in his memorandum of February 1885 the argument of some Japanese that the country might be dragged backward and become degenerate if it entered into an alliance with a non-progressive country like China.

One Westernising aspect which British diplomats noted in Japan's relations with China and Korea was the adoption of Western diplomatic practice. The Meiji leaders at the beginning were seen as following an approach to diplomacy which could be characterised as "Oriental". This is illustrated in Parkes's dispatch on the Okubo mission to Peking to negotiate the settlement of the Taiwan affair, as he wrote, 'He [Okubo] will doubtless feel his way with all the dilatoriness and tortuousness common to Orientals.'<sup>89</sup> Similarly, when reporting apparent Japanese indecision in the Taiwan affair in 1874, Parkes wrote: 'Wavering and uncertainty are such common features of Japanese action that it is not surprising these should mark their proceedings in a question of this importance.'<sup>90</sup> In contrast, in 1882 Parkes noted that in negotiating with the Koreans following the disturbance at Seoul, Japanese envoy Hanabusa displayed an energy similar to Western diplomats in overcoming the duplicity and evasions of the Koreans.<sup>91</sup> A similar comment was also forthcoming from Plunkett in reporting on the settlement of the Nagasaki affair in 1886 between Japan and China. He observed that unlike the Japanese, who wished to arrive at a speedy settlement, the Chinese Minister at Tokyo and the Chinese consul in Nagasaki procrastinated by engaging foreign legal experts to investigate the incident, and this delayed and complicated what ought to have been a very simple matter.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> FO 46/366, No. 178, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, March 27, 1887.

<sup>89</sup> Parkes's memorandum, Hakodate, August 26, 1874 in FO 46/182, No. 167, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 12, 1874.

<sup>90</sup> FO 46/182, No. 176, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, September 28, 1874. This followed a statement by Iwakura that in the event of war with China, Japan would not be the first to declare war if negotiations failed, which was opposed to his earlier remark that Japan would take the initiative in the hostility with China.

<sup>91</sup> FO 46/288, No. 126, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, September 11, 1882.

<sup>92</sup> Plunkett noted that as the Chinese government had engaged Drummond, an English barrister and legal adviser to the Chinese Customs, to take part in the enquiry on the clash between some 300 Chinese sailors and local Japanese police at Nagasaki in August 1886, this forced the Japanese to employ Kirkwood,

Japan was also seen as attempting to imitate the West in other ways. Kennedy, for instance, noted Japanese efforts to persuade the Chinese government to revise the Sino-Japanese treaty of 1871 by granting extra-territorial jurisdiction to Japan over its subjects in China as being due to Japan's wish to secure rights similar to those enjoyed by foreigners in Japan. Kennedy, however, doubted that China would accept the proposal since the Japanese argued that treaty revision would soon take place between Japan and European Powers and the latter would soon give up the right of extraterritoriality to Japan.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Parkes noted that the 1876 Treaty and the Supplementary Treaty and Trade Regulations with Korea showed a close resemblance to the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1858, even going beyond the latter in some respects. This elicited the censorious comment by Parkes that the Japanese applied 'a different mode of reasoning to their dealings with the Koreans'<sup>94</sup> in that while they complained of the extra-territorial clauses which had earlier been imposed by Western countries on Japan, they had been careful to stipulate their right of jurisdiction over their own subjects in Korea.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, while the Japanese government remonstrated against the imposition of low tariffs on Japan by the West, Japanese trade in Korea was free from any import or export duties. The Japanese were similarly criticised for obtaining for themselves other larger concessions which they opposed or refused to grant to foreigners in Japan, such as the exceedingly low rate of tonnage dues on Japanese shipping entering Korean ports, the unrestricted exportation of rice and other grain, the opening of Korean coastal trade to Japanese merchant-vessels, and the liberty granted to Japanese subjects to obtain land at the open ports in Korea by direct agreement with Koreans instead of only with the Korean government.<sup>96</sup>

### **The Northern Frontier Problem**

In addition to China and Korea, Japan also had a problematic relationship with Russia. One source of dispute was Sakhalin, which was claimed by both countries. After several years of negotiations, the difficulty was peacefully solved through the Treaty of St. Petersburg of May 1875, which effected the transfer of Sakhalin to Russia and the Kurile Islands to Japan. This diplomatic solution of the problem was welcomed by

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British legal adviser of the Judicial Department. FO 46/347, No.143, Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, September 10, 1886; *Ibid.*, No. 148, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, September 22, 1886.

<sup>93</sup> FO 46/152, No. 58, Adams to Granville, Yedo, March 11, 1872.

<sup>94</sup> FO 46/208, No. 61, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 2, 1876.

<sup>95</sup> FO 46/201, No. 58, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, March 27, 1876.

<sup>96</sup> FO 46/208, No. 171, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 26, 1876.



Parkes<sup>97</sup> for he had long recommended that Japan should avoid a direct contest with her northern neighbour. As he stated to Under Secretary Edmund Hammond on September 18, 1869, 'I have worked hard to persuade the Japanese Govt....and we may succeed in avoiding collision.'<sup>98</sup> In his view, a collision would only provide a pretext for Russia to seize Yezo (Ezo), which mainly comprised Hokkaido, which was more valuable than Sakhalin.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, he argued that given the firm hold acquired by the Russians on the south of Sakhalin, as reported by a British naval officer, Captain Denison,<sup>100</sup> and the weak military presence of Japan in the island, as discerned by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Shadwell in 1873 from his cruise in the Sea of Tartary, it was impossible for Japan to dislodge the Russians.<sup>101</sup> The best course for Japan, in Parkes's view, was some sort of exchange with Russia without loss of time. He advised Iwakura in September 1870 that it was better to accept the Russian offer for exchange and avoid delays which would strengthen the position of the Russians in Sakhalin. He added that since the Kurile islands offered by the Russians appeared to be nearly equal in extent to that part of Sakhalin under Japanese control, the country's national honour would not suffer by the transfer.<sup>102</sup> Besides, as he expressed to Soejima in November 1873, in view of the relatively harsh conditions in Sakhalin, 'Japan would do well to make the best bargain she could for her portion of Saghalin, which it appeared to me she would never be able to turn to material account.'<sup>103</sup>

Japanese plans to develop Hokkaido through the emigration of Japanese settlers to the northern island were regarded as sound by British diplomats as they felt that Russia also desired Hokkaido since, unlike Sakhalin, it was free from ice all year round. Chargé d'Affaires R. G. Watson in reporting the dispatch by the Japanese government of a large number of labourers to Hokkaido in 1872, observed that while such an undertaking enabled Japan to protect 'against the possibility of Russian encroachment on Yezo as on Saghalin, to which latter island Russia obtains access the more readily from its being so

<sup>97</sup> FO 46/194, No. 156, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, November 10, 1875.

<sup>98</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, September 18, 1869. Hosoya Chihiro attributed the diplomatic solution of the Sakhalin problem to the influence of British Minister Parkes on the Japanese government. See his work 'Japan's Policies Towards Russia,' in Morley, J. W., *Japan's Foreign Policy 1868-1941: A Research Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1974, p. 343.

<sup>99</sup> FO 391/15, Hammond Papers, Yedo, September 18, 1869.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Yokohama, November 19, 1869.

<sup>101</sup> FO 46/168, No. 79, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, October 6, 1873.

<sup>102</sup> FO 46/127, No. 134, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, September 5, 1870.

<sup>103</sup> FO 46/168, No. 93, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, November 3, 1873.

scantly peopled,<sup>104</sup> it also prevented Russia from posing a threat to British interests in the region:

Hakodate affords, at all seasons, an excellent anchorage, it would present a highly advantageous marine position for Russian vessels...should circumstances ever place Hakodate, which might be made a very strong fortress, in the hands of Russia, its possession by that Power would, I fear, constitute a formidable menace to Her Majesty's possession in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>105</sup>

One possible development in Japanese-Russian relations over which British diplomats showed some concern was the prospect of an alliance between the two countries in the 1870s and 1880s. For Parkes, the concern first emerged when he heard a report in April 1874 that General Enomoto, the Japanese Minister to Russia, had been authorized to surrender the Japanese rights in Sakhalin on condition either of alliance, or at least of neutrality on the part of Russia in the event of Japan invading Korea.<sup>106</sup> Though no such arrangement was made, in 1876 Parkes expressed the same suspicion when he observed the bestowal of decorations between Russia and Japan.<sup>107</sup> In the same vein, when a collision occurred in 1882 between Japan and Korea, Parkes wrote:

Russia...undoubtedly wishes to draw Japan into an alliance with herself for any political object that would make such an alliance desirable, and in any question that might arise with Korea she would, I think, endeavour to identify her action with that of Japan, if an opportunity were afforded her doing so.<sup>108</sup>

Kennedy, though less convinced than Parkes of the possibility of a real alliance between Japan and Russia, also suspected a Russian attempt to win Japan to her side when the Mikado and two Japanese ministers were invested with high Russian decorations in March 1880, at a time when the relations of both Russia and Japan with China were strained over the Russian encroachment of the Chinese territory in Sinkiang and the dispute over the Ryukyus between China and Japan.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>104</sup> FO 46/154, No. 12, Watson to Granville, Yedo, June 1, 1872. For more details on the reclamation program in Hokkaido by the Meiji government, see Harootunian, H. D., 'The Economic Rehabilitation of the Samurai in the Early Meiji Period' in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, August 1960, pp. 437-438.

<sup>105</sup> FO 46/155, No. 87, Watson to Granville, Yedo, September 3, 1872.

<sup>106</sup> FO 46/178, No. 175, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, April 28, 1874.

<sup>107</sup> FO 46/207, No. 123, Conf., Parkes to Derby, Yedo, July 25, 1876; FO 46/208, No. 145, Parkes to Derby, August 29, 1876. Those decorated included de Struve Russian Minister at Yedo by the Japanese government and to Vice-Admiral Enomoto, Japanese Envoy Extraordinary at St. Petersburg by the Russian government.

<sup>108</sup> FO 46/284, No. 41, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, March 25, 1882.

<sup>109</sup> FO 46/256, No. 47, Conf., Kennedy to Salisbury, Yedo, March 8, 1880.

Even if alliance with Russia became less of a concern, British diplomats emphasized that Japanese leaders remained wary of involvement in any conflict with Russia. In 1884, for instance, Plunkett maintained that while Inoue's own tendency was to throw the lot of Japan in with Britain and the United States, he was likely to side with the Continental Trio of France, Germany and Russia, in view of the latter's close proximity, and also the small probability that Britain would go to the expense of protecting Japan if she were to offend her Russian neighbour.<sup>110</sup>

Nevertheless, Japanese interest in closer understanding with another Western Power also began to be noted, and Plunkett hinted in particular at a possible understanding between Japan and Britain. As he reported at a time of high Anglo-Russian tension in April 1885, Japan 'will no doubt give us her moral support unless Russia bids very high indeed for her friendship,' though she 'will probably be afraid to show too open sympathy with us' for fear of possible revenge by Russia.<sup>111</sup> This orientation towards the West particularly Britain was undoubtedly welcomed by British diplomats. As Plunkett wrote in February 1885:

Our interest must be that Japan should be strong enough to resist any encroachments by Russia, and prosperous and rich enough to take large quantities of our manufactures. It must be our object that none of the fine Harbours of Japan should fall a prey to any Foreign Power, and thus become a base for future hostile action against our Ships...A good understanding between Japan and Great Britain is so evidently advantageous to both parties, that I can hardly conceive its not being soon firmly established, unless indeed the opportunity should be lost and Japan should in the meanwhile have thrown in her fate with that of Russia.<sup>112</sup>

Despite the warning by British Chargé d'Affaires O'Connor at Peking of Japan's very critical attitude towards the occupation of Port Hamilton, which took place in mid-April 1885, Plunkett maintained that Japan desired friendly relations with Britain. Not only had Inoue made no official objection to their presence at Port Hamilton, but also the general position expressed to him by the Tokyo government was that 'Russia is the Power against which Japan has especially to be on her guard.'<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, despite such assurances, he never ruled out a possible Japanese alliance with Russia. In relation to the Anglo-Russian tensions, he recorded in May 1885 that 'if she cannot see her way to joining

<sup>110</sup> FO 46/315, No. 187, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, October 21, 1884; FO 46/317, No. 249, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, December 22, 1884; FO 46/329, No. 87, Very Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, March 31, 1885.

<sup>111</sup> FO 46/329, No. 97, Very Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 2, 1885.

<sup>112</sup> FO 46/328, No. 53, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885.

<sup>113</sup> FO 46/330, No. 138, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, May 11, 1885.

England, [Japan] would be strongly tempted to prefer an alliance with Russia to a neutrality which would probably draw her into difficulties with both belligerents.' Such a possibility, according to Plunkett, might be seen in the pro-Russian sentiment expressed in the *Japan Mail*, which sometimes contained the views of leading Japanese ministers, as well as in the bestowal of decorations on high Japanese officials by Russia and in the pressure of the war party in Japan.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, in February 1885 Plunkett had reported that he had heard that Russia had made some secret proposals to the Japanese government, presumably directed against Britain.<sup>115</sup>

By June 1885, Plunkett felt able to state that Inoue considered Russia, France and Germany to be the aggressive and dangerous Powers, and that in spite of the shock given to him by British temporary occupation of Port Hamilton, 'Inoue continued to group England and the United States as the natural friends and protectors of Japan,' and wished to side with the Anglo-Saxons, as against the Continental Races. This was because the Foreign Minister believed that 'the interests of the latter in Japan were almost exclusively political, and were governed mainly by considerations of European policy; whereas England and the United States have large material and commercial interests on the spot which would benefit by Japanese development and progress.'<sup>116</sup>

It may have been partly because of the general encouraging reports by Plunkett, and perhaps also the fear that Japan might incline towards Russia, that Lord Granville raised with the British Minister in June 1885 the possibility of an alliance with Japan.<sup>117</sup> In response to Granville's enquiry regarding what steps might be taken with a view to secure such an alliance, Plunkett replied that Britain should help Japan out of the deadlock in treaty revision by taking the lead in negotiating on 'more generous principles.'<sup>118</sup> While British general policy with regard to treaty revision did indicate a gradual acceptance of compromise towards Japan, as shown in the Anglo-German draft of 1886, Plunkett's own attitude was to promote the desired close understanding with Japan by persistently urging Japanese leaders to look towards Britain. In December 1885 Plunkett impressed upon Ito and Inoue that the British government attached great importance to the establishment of good relations with Japan, and urged them 'to look to England sooner than to any of the Continental Powers, for sympathy or support.'<sup>119</sup> A few months later, he maintained to Ito that while there were three Western Powers of which

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> FO 46/328, No. 53, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885.

<sup>116</sup> FO 46/331, No. 155, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, June 3, 1885.

<sup>117</sup> FO 45, No. 64, Granville to Plunkett, June 8, 1885.

<sup>118</sup> FO 46/332, No. 193, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 29, 1885.

<sup>119</sup> FO 46/335, No. 263, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, December 18, 1885.

Japan would always have to take account, viz. Britain, Russia, and the United States, 'Japan had more to expect, and less to fear, from Great Britain.' While the United States was pre-occupied with her own affairs due to the great extent of her territory and was unlikely to waste time or treasure on extensive undertakings abroad in affording protection to Japan, Russia had covetous designs upon Japan. In contrast, Britain, he assured Ito, desired to 'to see Japan strong, flourishing and independent.'<sup>120</sup> To his satisfaction, there were positive signs in Japan of interest in an alliance with Britain. In October 1886 Plunkett noted the appearance of some articles in the *Hochi Shimbun*, which maintained that it was in the interest of Japan to have a good understanding with Britain.<sup>121</sup> By December 1886 Plunkett was able to write to Lord Iddesleigh that he believed that Japan was fully alive to the paramount necessity of maintaining good relations with Britain 'because she is likely of all the European Powers to be most useful as a friend, or most dangerous as an enemy.'<sup>122</sup> Perhaps stronger evidence of a Japanese inclination towards an alliance with Britain can be found in Inoue's suggestion in 1887 of a tripartite alliance between Japan, China and Britain to check Russia.<sup>123</sup> Although Plunkett did not encourage this overture, probably because the inclusion of China raised the bogey of a future alliance between the two East Asian countries alone, it seems reasonable to suppose that such indications of pro-British feeling on the part of Inoue and the consistent advocacy of a close relationship by British diplomats helped to lay the foundations for the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902.

### **The Revision of the Unequal Treaties**

Ever since it came into power, the Meiji government had tirelessly striven for an equal footing with the West through the revision of the unequal treaties, which were seen as an infringement on the sovereignty of Japan with provisions such as extraterritoriality, the most favoured nation clause and tariff restrictions on Japan. In view of the importance of British interests in Japan, the subject of revision preoccupied British diplomats for many years. Only in 1894 did the long drawn-out negotiations result in a revised treaty.<sup>124</sup>

Prior to 1894, British diplomats generally regarded Japan as being unprepared for treaty revision and did not accord her equal status with the West. One of the earliest

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 71, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, March 1, 1886.

<sup>121</sup> FO 46/347, No. 163, Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, October 12, 1886.

<sup>122</sup> FO 46/349, No. 212, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, December 10, 1886.

<sup>123</sup> FO 46/366, No. 178, Secret, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, March 27, 1887.

<sup>124</sup> Following the revised treaty with Britain in July 1894, other powers followed suit. The 1894 treaty abolished extraterritoriality, subject to the implementation of new Japanese legal codes. This was to take effect from 1899, while the controlled tariffs continued until 1911.

comments in this connection was made by Chargé d'Affaires Adams following his conversation with Chief Minister Sanjo on May 16, 1872 on the object of the Iwakura mission to discuss treaty revision in Europe. As he put it:

The great aim of the Japanese rulers is to make it appear that their country is the equal of all other nations, and they are even prone to assume to their own people a superiority over those nations, which in their hearts they feel to be visionary. As is natural in a country which has been long isolated from the rest of the world, the Japanese are inordinately vain, and nothing would flatter their vanity more than to have a great conference in Europe, which would be attended by Plenipotentiaries of all the Treaty Powers, assembled as it were at the bidding of Japan, and this is the light in which it would be represented here. The Ambassadors, too, would naturally be elated with the idea of this European congress when the affairs of their country would be discussed by them in the eyes of the whole civilized world.<sup>125</sup>

On why Japan was not ready, Adams pointed to the unsettled condition in Japan in the early 1870s. Despite Sanjo's remark that one reason for the government to undertake the revision was because the conversion of the *han* into *ken* which had begun in 1871 had been peacefully accepted by the people of Japan, Adams was skeptical, for he observed that there was much discontent in various parts of the country. Furthermore, he observed that Japan had yet to settle the problem of the persecution of Christianity and the admission of foreigners into the interior of Japan. Unless these issues were first solved, serious negotiations for treaty revision could not be carried out.<sup>126</sup>

Other British diplomats pointed to the unpreparedness of the Japanese legal system to allow for the abolition of extraterritoriality in Japan. Parkes, for instance, in July 1873 maintained that in spite of Japanese proposals to assimilate Western practices, it would be many years before the Japanese could be expected to successfully establish a satisfactory judicial system. Consequently he observed that it would be a long time before the treaties could be revised.<sup>127</sup> In January 1874 he again emphasized not only that 'Japan possessed no Courts or system of law adapted to Western ideas and practice,' but also that the Japanese would find it difficult to discharge their responsibility over foreigners.<sup>128</sup> A more lengthy comment by Parkes on this problem is in a memorandum of 1882, following a conference in Tokyo on treaty revision, in which his view of the premature condition of Japanese legal systems was supported by English legal experts, including

<sup>125</sup> FO 46/153, No. 92, Conf., Adams to Granville, Yedo, May 20, 1872.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Parkes's memorandum, Yokohama, July 24, 1873, in FO 46/167, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, July 29, 1873.

<sup>128</sup> FO 46/176, No. 5, Parkes to Granville, Yedo, January 18, 1874.

Kirkwood and R. Rennie. The Japanese, Parkes wrote, should proceed in a gradual way and consider a test or probationary period since their proposal for jurisdiction over foreigners was one 'of great magnitude and of great difficulty.'<sup>129</sup>

Plunkett, who succeeded Parkes in 1883, held a similar view. In an April 1884 dispatch he wrote:

To give jurisdiction...to Japan over foreigners, before she is capable of exercising it properly, would be a fatal gift, which would necessarily lead to serious trouble, and probably before long to international complications ... We are prepared to give up jurisdiction whenever we consider it safe; but when that will be depends on the progress Japan will have made in the ideas and habits of modern jurisprudence, and we must reserve to ourselves to be the judges of when that moment will be arrived.<sup>130</sup>

Interestingly, even Satow, who befriended many Meiji leaders, maintained in 1876 that concessions should not be given without something being secured in exchange. To him, 'Sentimental foreign policy is a dead loss' and 'What is required in Japan is not that we should give up to the Japanese whatever speculators on abstract justice may choose to attribute to them as their due, but that we should treat them with courtesy in all our relations with them.'<sup>131</sup>

Of the many Treaty Powers, Britain was arguably the most reluctant Power to concede to Japan, and historians have mostly seen it as the greatest obstacle in the path of treaty revision.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, while it was not until 1893 that negotiations with Britain began to make progress, it should be noted that there was a gradual change in British diplomats' attitudes. Unlike in the 1870s, British diplomats in the 1880s, though still opposing the entire abolition of the treaties, were prepared to make more concessions to Japan. Satow, for instance, told Plunkett during his visit to the British Embassy in Paris on September 10, 1883 of 'the desirability of being able to offer her [Japan] some little

<sup>129</sup> Parkes Papers, 6/6, Draft, No. 164, Parkes to Granville, Tokyo, November 20, 1882, see the enclosed memorandum on Jurisdiction. Parkes noted that only the simplest portion of the new laws, namely the Criminal Code had yet been completed by 1882 while the Civil and Commercial Codes had yet to be drafted and completed. Kirkwood among others maintained that Japanese judges as a body were incompetent and without qualifications, that there was a lack of qualified interpreters, and that the judges had no idea of the relative position of Bench and Bar. Rennie observed that though the new Japanese penal code might be a fair compilation, no native judge was capable of administering it.

<sup>130</sup> FO 46/311, No. 59, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 21, 1884.

<sup>131</sup> PRO 30/33/15/5, Satow's Diary, April 24, 1876.

<sup>132</sup> See e.g., Nish, I. H., 'Japan's Policies Toward Britain,' in Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 186; Beasley, W. G., *Japanese Imperialism 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1987, p. 33; Treat, P. J., *Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Japan 1853-1895* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), Vol. I, 1932, p. 498.

encouragement' in treaty revision.<sup>133</sup> Satow reiterated his view three days later at the Foreign Office in London.<sup>134</sup>

Such a change may have been partly due to what diplomats saw as Japan's progress in Western civilization and also to a desire to prevent Japan from establishing a close relationship with other Powers which might in turn affect British interests in the Far Eastern region. This may be seen in Satow's comments in September 1883 regarding various social, economic and political reforms in Japan:

In short, Japan desires to be received into the European brotherhood of nations, and spares no effort in making good her claim to the rank she is ambitious of having accorded to her. Should it not be the policy of Western states to encourage her aspirations and favour her endeavours, rather than to turn the cold shoulder to her, and force her to make common cause with China [?]<sup>135</sup>

Satow's change of attitude in favour of Japan was even more evident when, during a dinner with some leading Japanese statesmen in 1884, he said it was his belief that 'Japan was destined to achieve a leading place among the nations of Asia' and that he 'had never had any doubts about her future since 1868'.<sup>136</sup> A clear statement on Japan's progress was also made by Gubbins. In response to the argument by Vice-Foreign Minister Yoshida in April 1884 that the degeneration of Turkey was because of the imposition of extra-territoriality and other treaty constraints by Western Powers, Gubbins replied that 'I did not think any just parallel could be drawn between Turkey and Japan; that the former might, as he said, be retrogressing, but that in Japan progress was an established fact'.<sup>137</sup>

Plunkett also, although he felt that major revision was premature, was readier than Parkes to effect some compromise with Japan and admitted Japan's vigorous attempt to achieve progress towards the revision of the treaties. In response to French Minister Sienkiewicz's criticisms of Japanese proceedings and refusal to meet the wishes of the Japanese government, Plunkett wrote in December 1884:

[Sienkiewicz] makes the not uncommon mistake of looking at Japan exclusively through the Suez Canal, whereas it is now-adays more through San Francisco, Vladivostock and Berlin that the future political development of Japan is being influenced. Monsieur Sienkiewicz's reasoning that Turks, and Japanese are both Asiatics, and therefore

<sup>133</sup> PRO 30/33/15/7, Satow's Diary, September 10, 1883.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, September 13, 1883.

<sup>135</sup> PRO 30/33/1/2, Satow Papers, memorandum by Satow to Plunkett, September 24, 1883.

<sup>136</sup> PRO 30/33/15/8, Satow Diary, November 3, 1884. This particular occasion took place during Satow's visit to Japan from September 27 to November 22, 1884. He was then appointed British Minister to Siam.

<sup>137</sup> Gubbins's report to Plunkett, April 18, 1884 enclosed in FO 46/311, No. 57, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 19, 1884.



must be treated, to a certain extent, alike, is erroneous in view of the radical differences both of fact and of tendency between the ruling Powers of this country and those who still reign on the Bosphorus; and the less certain Foreign Powers will admit the logic of facts which is every day becoming more potent, the more inevitably is Japan thrown into the hands of other nations, with whom naturally she would have but little sympathy.<sup>138</sup>

In explaining his attitude, Plunkett may be said to have reflected a changing trend in the thinking of British diplomats in general. As mentioned earlier, Satow held a conciliatory attitude towards Japan. The fact that Satow had made his view known to Plunkett in September 1883 may have also swayed the latter towards a more favourable view of Japan. Furthermore, although British residents of the Japanese treaty ports mostly opposed concessions to Japan,<sup>139</sup> representations by certain foreign residents, such as a memorandum which he received in May 1884 from a Committee of Protestant Missionaries in Japan may have also contributed to Plunkett's view. Among other things, the memorandum suggested that while exceptional arrangements were necessary to secure foreign interests, they should not stand in the way of a speedy revision of the treaties 'such as shall be both just in principle, and the generous acknowledgement on the part of Foreign Nations of the real progress which Japan has made since the present Treaties were formed.'<sup>140</sup>

The position of Germany on treaty revision may have also been a factor. As the negotiations continued in the 1880s, Plunkett noted the increasing influence of Germany, and in a dispatch of February 1885 he observed that one reason for Japan to look up to Germany was because 'Germany was the first European Power who showed a disposition to relax the excessive rigour of the existing Conventions.'<sup>141</sup> While his statement was not condemnatory towards Germany, he gradually came to suspect that Germany's motive was to extract concessions in return for treaty revision. The first sign of such an attempt, according to Plunkett, was in 1887 when German Minister Von Holleben took advantage of Germany's involvement in the settlement of the Nagasaki affair between China and Japan to secretly secure China's cooperation with Japan with regard to Japanese treaty revision.<sup>142</sup> In return, he alleged, Germany would receive more commercial concessions than other Powers through a secret treaty with Japan. Unsurprisingly, this was objected to

<sup>138</sup> FO 46/317, No. 230, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, December 11, 1884.

<sup>139</sup> Hoare, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>140</sup> FO 46/312, No. 70, Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, May 10, 1884.

<sup>141</sup> FO 46/328, No. 53, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885.

<sup>142</sup> FO 46/365, No. 41, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 10, 1887; *ibid.*, No. 44, Secret, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 10, 1887.

by Plunkett as injurious to British interests in the country.<sup>143</sup> Soon afterwards Plunkett also came to suspect Von Holleben of having sought commercial benefits from the Japanese in return for helping to secure the concessions made by the British government in the Anglo-German draft of June 1886.<sup>144</sup> Although Plunkett was assured by the German Minister in March 1887 that Germany desired to work in concert with Britain towards treaty revision,<sup>145</sup> the fact that the Japanese government exhibited a pro-German tendency in their internal reforms and employed a growing number of Germans did indicate the increased strength of German influence and this may have contributed to the accommodating attitude of Plunkett towards Japan. Moreover, Plunkett desired a close understanding between Japan and Britain, and one way of achieving this, in his view, was through more concessions to Japan in treaty revision. This may be seen in his response to Granville's enquiry in 1885 about a possible alliance with Japan.

By 1887, Plunkett was expressing his preference for a speedy revision, for he perceived the problem of securing compensation from the Japanese in return for British concessions if the negotiations were allowed to drag on. On hearing in July 1887 of serious objections in Japan to Inoue's proposals for the jurisdiction convention, Plunkett observed that 'it is a case of the Sibylline books; every month we lose, the more exacting will be the demands of the Japanese, and the smaller the counter-concessions we obtain.'<sup>146</sup> Hugh Fraser, who succeeded Plunkett, shared his predecessor's view, though he was even more conscious that the government would be reluctant to give any new guarantees of concessions to Treaty Powers for fear of increasing the already serious agitation in the country for treaty revision. As he put it in August 1889:

It was not to be expected, perhaps, that the sort of patriotic movement which led to the repudiation of the work of the Treaty Revision Conferences in 1887 would at once cease, and the country become reasonable upon the subject. The success obtained then served rather to inspire Japanese politicians with a yet warmer goal for the nation's honour, and a keener impatience for the immediate attainment of all the independence which they thought to be due to her.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 46, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 13, 1887.

<sup>144</sup> FO 46/365, No. 49, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, February 18, 1887. The concessions by Britain were in respect to the tariff, whereby Japan was allowed to increase her import duties up to twenty-five per cent. instead of the averaged fixed tariff of five per cent., and in the reduction of the number of foreign judges in future Japanese courts.

<sup>145</sup> FO 46/366, No. 71, Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, March 18, 1887.

<sup>146</sup> FO 46/368, No. 188, Very Conf., Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, July 9, 1887.

<sup>147</sup> FO 46/387, No. 97, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 16, 1889. Nish observes that one reason for foreigners to become more amenable to the revision in the 1880s was the fear that the attacks by the anti-foreign party on Japanese statesmen might be turned against foreigners. Nish, I., *Japanese Foreign Policy 1869-1942* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1977, p. 30.

So hostile was the agitation that Fraser observed that concession might lead to assassination. Even Okuma's project for treaty revision, he added, which at first was generally approved, had come to be considered 'too far subservient to foreign pretensions.'<sup>148</sup>

There was also the issue of British commercial interests in Japan. While the British merchant community in Japan wished to maintain the old treaty in order to secure the more important privileges of extraterritoriality and high tariffs,<sup>149</sup> British diplomats such as Plunkett and Fraser favoured the revision because they believed that greater advantage would be obtained for general British trade. To Plunkett, as he reported in April 1884, the old treaties not only confined foreign trade to five open ports but also 'exposed it to all sorts of inconveniences which prevent its natural development.'<sup>150</sup> In 1889 Fraser noted that the situation might become more serious since some other Powers had accepted or planned to accept the Japanese offer of commercial advantages in return for placing their subjects under Japanese jurisdiction.<sup>151</sup> This, to Fraser, would result in practical disadvantages to Britain and pressure on the British government by their mercantile community.<sup>152</sup> Apart from commercial advantages, Fraser also maintained that revision would also benefit British missionaries and travellers as they would no longer be confined to treaty ports and would be able to go into the interior of Japan.<sup>153</sup> In short, Fraser took a view that 'the old treaties are wearing out, and becoming daily inapplicable in some respect or other to circumstances.'<sup>154</sup>

Interestingly, Fraser perceived that the slow revision was also partly due to the excessive demands of Britain, particularly regarding jurisdiction. As he stated in August 1889:

Amongst the causes of our present weakness must be reckoned, I fear, a fault of requiring too much. ...a principal degree of blame [for the breaking up of the 1887 conferences] must be borne by the demands in regard to jurisdiction and guarantees of justice. ...the Jurisdiction Convention was too rigid for practical service as an international compact. I cannot help confessing that I have regretted very much to find inserted into the counter draft of Her Majesty's Government, even

<sup>148</sup> FO 46/387, No. 188, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 16, 1889.

<sup>149</sup> Hoare, *op. cit.* pp. 98, 100.

<sup>150</sup> FO 46/311, No. 58, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, April 19, 1884.

<sup>151</sup> By November 1889, the United States, Germany and Russia had already signed treaties with Japan, while France had embarked upon independent negotiations.

<sup>152</sup> FO 46/387, No. 97, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, November 15, 1889.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* Fraser did receive some memorandums by different missionary associations in Japan urging the revision of the treaty since it would enable them to spread their missionary activities in the interior. See the memorandums in e.g., FO 46/399, No. 95, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, October 3, 1890; *ibid.*, No. 106, Tokyo, October 27, 1890.

<sup>154</sup> FO 46/387, Private, Fraser to Sanderson, Tokyo, November 15, 1889.

at this eleventh hour, stipulations, taken from that scheme, of a character that it is difficult to avoid qualifying as obviously vexatious and unacceptable, such as that which requires the Disciplinary Court, to which the Foreign Judges are subject, to be composed exclusively of Foreigners, and that which requires these Foreign Judges to be excluded from re-employment after one term of service (lest they should become too Japanese in sympathy), and...a demand...that the foreign plaintiff shall have advantages of "forum" over the native defendant.<sup>155</sup>

Fraser further maintained that while it did not seem expedient to denounce the old treaty altogether since this would set a fatal example to other Oriental nations, Britain should 'conclude such a convention as Her Majesty's Government may approve as sufficient, discarding all that may be discarded and standing fast by all that is absolutely necessary.'<sup>156</sup> Arguments such as these must have contributed to the decision by the British government to conclude the commercial treaty with Japan in 1894 which opened the way to the eventual abolition of the unequal treaties.

### **Japan as a Military Power**

In their reports, British diplomats referred to Japan, like China, as an Asiatic or Eastern Power. But the diplomats generally felt that despite the modernisation of the Japanese army and navy under the Meiji government, Japan still ranked below China and was not well-prepared or equipped to enter into military conflict with other Powers. The post-1895 concept of the yellow peril, which signifies Western alarm at Japan's rise as a formidable military power and as a threat to Western civilization,<sup>157</sup> was far from British diplomats' perceptions of Japan in 1868-90.

The only country which was seen as inferior to Japan was Korea, though in 1873 Parkes was skeptical of Soejima's expectation of quick success in a war with Korea.<sup>158</sup> In comparison with China, Parkes was particularly dismissive of Japan's military strength. This is shown in his comments on Japan during the Taiwan affair, when he observed that the 'vessels constructed in one only of the Chinese arsenals are superior in force and number to the whole Japanese navy.' He similarly regarded as inferior the Japanese land forces.<sup>159</sup> Given this view, it is not surprising that Parkes expressed his disappointment

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 97, Conf., Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, August 16, 1889. By "forum" it means that foreign judges were to be in the majority in future Japanese courts.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Lehmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>158</sup> FO 46/168, No. 91, Conf., Parkes to Granville, Yedo, November 3, 1873.

<sup>159</sup> FO 46/180, No. 103, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, June 9, 1874; also see FO 46/180, No. 121, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, July 6, 1874.

with China in conceding to Japan over Taiwan in the 1874 settlement.<sup>160</sup> Despite its success in exacting reparation from China, the perception of a weak Japan continued. In 1880, when there were rumours of Japanese war preparations during the dispute over the Ryukyu islands, Parkes maintained that 'though the patriotism of the people would enable them to resist invasion [by China], they must be aware of their inability to make offensive war upon a country possessed of resources so much greater than their own.'<sup>161</sup>

A number of factors may have contributed to Parkes's view. For example, in 1874 he questioned whether the conscription system introduced in the previous year would actually allow Japan to maintain a large force in the field in the event of a prolonged war. His doubts appear to have been aroused by the admission of a Japanese minister that the agricultural and artisan classes objected to the conscription system while the samurai only cared to be enrolled in bodies of clansmen, to which the government were strongly opposed. He also observed that foreign training officers employed by the Chinese in the Pescadores were said to have no high opinion of the Japanese ships, that the Chinese on that station manoeuvred their ships better, had their ships and engines in better order, were good gunners and had good guns.<sup>162</sup> Moreover, Parkes may have also reflected on a report by Plunkett on the unauthorized firing of weapons by soldiers in two different regiments stationed at Kumamoto in 1875. On why this incident occurred, *Chargé d'Affaires* Plunkett reported that although the soldiers were armed and drilled on the French system, 'their discipline is wretched, and they have maintained far too much of the independence of the old 'Samurai' for it to be possible for their officers to keep them in order.'<sup>163</sup> In August 1878 when a mutiny broke out among the Imperial Guard, Parkes also noted that it was partly due to the general lack of discipline, stressing that the officers exercised only a slight control over their men. As he saw it, the handling of the mutiny revealed the inefficiency of Japanese military organization, and he was not convinced that this would be rectified.<sup>164</sup>

As to Japan's military power in the 1880s, some diplomats shared Parkes's view. For instance, in a report of 1881, *Chargé d'Affaires* Kennedy wrote,

In the event of complications in the extreme East, the alliance or hostility of Japan could not form an important factor for some years to come. ... There is always a possibility, although, I believe, a remote one,

<sup>160</sup> Parkes to Wade, Copy, Yedo, February 16, 1875 enclosed in FO 46/ 190, No. 32, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, February 22, 1875.

<sup>161</sup> FO 46/256, Parkes's memorandum, January 30, 1880.

<sup>162</sup> FO 46/182, No. 184, Parkes to Derby, Yedo, October 13, 1874.

<sup>163</sup> FO 46/191, Private, Plunkett to Tenterden, Yedo, April 27, 1875.

<sup>164</sup> FO 46/230, No. 83, Parkes to Salisbury, Yedo, August 31, 1878.

of an attack upon Japan by China but in view of the present military weakness of Japan and of her financial embarrassments which preclude the purchase of more ships, it is clearly the policy of Japan to endeavour to remove all causes of complaint on the part of China and thus obviate the humiliation of defeat.<sup>165</sup>

This critical comment was based on an unfavourable report by Lieutenant Thomas James, Instructor to the Japanese Naval Cadets, which concluded that 'the present state of the Navy of Japan is in all respects unsatisfactory.' Among others, James's criticisms included the over-representation of Satsuma men in the navy, the lack of discipline in the service, the insufficiency of funds for the navy, and the holding back of those officers and men who had studied abroad from the promotion they deserved by inferior and jealous senior officers.<sup>166</sup> In addition to James's report, Kennedy was also assured by the French Military Attaché that the efficiency of the Japanese army had greatly deteriorated since the departure in 1879 of the French military mission.<sup>167</sup>

Plunkett too, though he noted some improvements in the Japanese forces in the 1880s, remained skeptical of Japanese success in the event of war with China. In 1884 he observed that although Japan might win an initial victory in a conflict with China over Korea, he advised the Japanese government to avoid such a conflict because China would some day become a great Power capable of exacting revenge upon Japan.<sup>168</sup> Similarly, in January 1885 Plunkett again observed that Japan would be making a mistake if she decided to provoke her powerful neighbour China.<sup>169</sup> The British Minister repeated his view in June 1886 to Inoue,

...however nice the 50,000 or 60,000 men of the Japanese army might look on the Parade Ground, it would be folly for such a force to attempt an expedition to a foreign country which would tax the energies and resources of even one of the Great European Powers. Had His Excellency forgotten the difficulties which France met with in Tonquin? I did not wish to depreciate the progress of the Japanese army. I considered that they were amply sufficient for self defence, and would be able to made a stubborn resistance against any troops which should attack this country, but His Excellency must remember that a war of defence, and a war of aggression were two totally different things, and for Japan to attack China would in my opinion lead unnecessarily to the military and financial collapse of the Empire.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>165</sup> FO 46/273, No. 110, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, September 17, 1881.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas H. James's report, Yedo, September 1881, encl. in FO 46/273, No. 110, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, September 17, 1881.

<sup>167</sup> FO 46/273, No. 110, Conf., Kennedy to Granville, Yedo, September 17, 1881.

<sup>168</sup> FO 46/317, No. 258, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, December 31, 1884.

<sup>169</sup> FO 46/327, No. 22, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, January 19, 1885.

<sup>170</sup> FO 46/344, No. 85, Secret, Plunkett to Rosebury, Tokyo, June 2, 1886.

That Japan would remain inferior to China even in the future was clearly anticipated by Plunkett when he warned in December 1886: 'The comparative weakness of Japan is less now than it will be a few years hence, when China has had more time to develop her army and navy on European principles.'<sup>171</sup>

In general, Japanese military development in the 1880s attracted relatively little attention from British diplomats. Gubbins did report in 1885 on the engagement of a German military instructor, Major Clemens Meckel, to reorganise the Imperial Japanese army on German lines, but this was not seen as particularly important.<sup>172</sup> In 1887 Plunkett recorded a government appeal for public donations for the purpose of strengthening the naval defence along the Japanese coast,<sup>173</sup> while Chargé d'Affaires P. Le Poer Trench observed an increase in the naval expenditure following the entry of Kuroda, who favoured the expansion of the navy, into the Cabinet.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless, in reporting these developments no British diplomat referred to Japan as having the potential to become a significant military power in East Asia. More surprising is the absence of diplomatic comment on the grand manoeuvres of Japanese troops in early 1890, which prompted a fairly positive view by other foreign diplomats in Tokyo of the capability of Imperial Japanese forces against foreign invasion.<sup>175</sup>

The fact that British diplomats overlooked Japan's military potential may be contrasted with the more favourable views of British naval officers of China Station and Admiralty in the 1880s. For instance, the negative 1881 report by Kennedy was disputed by Admiral Willis, Commander-in-Chief of the China Station. Across a copy of the Chargé d'Affaires' report he wrote: 'I regret that Mr. Kennedy should have considered it necessary to write his dispatch to Earl Granville. I entirely dissent from his view, and have a very high opinion of the Japanese Navy. I should myself feel indisposed to pay such attention to Mr. James' story, who is in the pay of the Japanese government.'<sup>176</sup> Similarly, Captain S. Long who was asked by the Admiralty to make a report on the naval and military resources of Japan observed in 1883 that although naval discipline was defective, other aspects of the Japanese military were satisfactory and praiseworthy. His conclusion was that 'in their own waters and in proportion to their strength, they would be

<sup>171</sup> FO 46/349, No. 212, Conf., Plunkett to Iddesleigh, Tokyo, December 10, 1886.

<sup>172</sup> Gubbins's memorandum, Tokyo, February 9, 1885, in FO 46/328, No. 53, Conf., Plunkett to Granville, Tokyo, February 16, 1885.

<sup>173</sup> FO 46/366, No. 107, Plunkett to Salisbury, Tokyo, April 23, 1887.

<sup>174</sup> FO 46/369, No. 230, Trench to Salisbury, Tokyo, September 27, 1887.

<sup>175</sup> One such foreign diplomat was French Minister Sienkiewicz. See Sims, *French Policy*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>176</sup> Adm. 1. 6,575. Piece 239, September 29, 1881 quoted in Carter. B. J., *Great Britain and the Meiji Navy 1868-1895*, M.A. in Area Studies (Far East), University of London, 1970, p. 24.

found obstinate enemies.'<sup>177</sup> More positive still was a suggestion in 1888 of some sort of alliance between Britain and Japan by the Commander-in-Chief of the China Station, Vice-Admiral R. Vessey-Hamilton: 'An alliance with China as suggested might be useful, but we must be prepared for the obloquy we should incur from the barbarities which they could undoubtedly perpetrate. The Japanese would be far more useful allies and their statesmen, naval and military officials and their naval and military systems, are far more in unison with our own than are the Chinese.'<sup>178</sup>

By 1890, however, even British diplomats were becoming less sure that Japan could be ignored as a military power. In that year, in response to an anti-foreign article in a leading Japanese newspaper, the *Choya Shimbun*, which proclaimed that Japan had become a great Power, Hugh Fraser presented a much less dismissive assessment of its comparative strength than his predecessors would have thought realistic, even if it was ultimately equivocal:

It is true that Japan is a very strong country, although it may not be necessary to accept her own estimate of her strength to its fullest extent; that she is protected by the sea on all sides, is divided by thousands of miles of ocean from the stronger Powers, and contains a population of from thirty to forty millions of people of a distinctly warlike character. The Japanese military and naval resources have been concentrated since the deposition of the Shogun and astonishingly well organized under European instruction. But whether the country would bear the brunt of a foreign war, or dissolve itself once more into anarchy under such a trial, is a question very difficult to answer.<sup>179</sup>

## **Conclusion**

British diplomats' comments on Japan's foreign policy in 1868-90 covered various issues but focused on Japan's relations with China, Korea and Russia, and treaty revision. Their reports are significant because their assessments of the political, financial and military factors which shaped Japanese foreign policy were often based on statements by Meiji leaders such as Ito, Inoue, Iwakura and Soejima. Their reports on Japan's relations with her neighbours have an added interest as they throw light on British diplomatic perceptions of Japanese current and potential military strength, even if there is no hint in them of Japan's later victories over China and Russia.

<sup>177</sup> See the encl. Long's report in FO 46/308, Conf., Admiralty to Sec. of State, August 9, 1883.

<sup>178</sup> Foreign Intelligence Committee, Vol. XI, No. 129-146 quoted in Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>179</sup> FO 46/398, No. 10, Fraser to Salisbury, Tokyo, January 13, 1890. The article was in the *Choya Shimbun* of January 9, 1890.



On Japanese relations with China and Korea, several points should be noted. The first is that British diplomats give a picture of Japanese policy as fluctuating, beginning with the pursuit of Eastern cooperation at the beginning of the period, as signified in the Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1871, then of Japanese expansionism in the early to mid-1870s, but then reverting to the idea of a friendly relationship and possibly alliance with China and Korea in the late 1870s and 1880s. British diplomats regarded a Far Eastern alliance as essentially anti-Western and, therefore, to be prevented. Satow, for instance, had this objective in mind in 1883 when encouraging the British government to give more concessions on treaty revision to Japan, while earlier in 1871 Adams objected to the article of the Sino-Japanese Treaty which he misinterpreted as establishing a defensive and offensive alliance. Although there was a suggestion from Inoue in 1887 that Britain might join an alliance of Japan and China, this was dismissed out of hand by Plunkett. The diplomats' opposition to a Sino-Japanese alliance is not surprising for such a coalition could have threatened Britain's very extensive interests in the region. However, it should be noted that they did not portray an Eastern alliance between Japan, China and Korea, as an unprogressive or anti-modern move on the part of Japan, whereas, they did approve the adoption by Meiji leaders of Western diplomatic practice in carrying out negotiations with China and Korea.

Japanese-Russian relations in the Meiji period offered one example of modernisation in that the treaty signed by the two countries ended the anomalous joint control of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands by giving Russia clear sovereign rights over the former and Japan similar control over the latter. This arrangement was welcomed by Parkes, who was anxious to that Russia might find otherwise find a pretext for war and thus extend its power in East Asia. It was for similar reasons that he and other British diplomats sought to discourage Japan from entering into armed conflict with China or Korea. They were also concerned that Japan and Russia might enter into an understanding which might weaken Britain's position not only in East Asia but also in Central Asia. By the mid-1880s, however, they were detecting signs that Japan, though still as yet fearful of Russia, was more inclined to side with Britain, and these indications of a pro-British orientation, together with the support given to them by British diplomats, especially Plunkett, may have helped to prepare the way for the later Anglo-Japanese alliance. It should be noted, though, that British diplomats did not explicitly describe Japanese policy as progressive.

As to treaty revision, one may find different responses by British diplomats with regard to such developments as the introduction into Japan of a modern legal system and

also to the general social, economic and political reforms in Japan. Yet while the reforms encouraged Satow, Plunkett and Fraser to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards Japan, others were less easily influenced, as was indicated by Parkes's persisting objection to revision. The more conciliatory attitude of British diplomats after Parkes's departure in 1883, however, owed something to other factors, notably concern about the increasing influence of Germany and the threat to British economic interests in Japan, acknowledgement of greater advantages to British merchants and missionaries from the opening of Japanese interior, and awareness that the more treaty revision was delayed, the less likely it was that Japan would make the legal concessions Britain sought.

On various occasions, British diplomats tendered their advice to the Meiji government, generally urging it to adopt friendly relations with other countries such as China, Korea and Russia and settle difficulties that arose with her neighbours through diplomatic and peaceful means. In doing so, British diplomats not only desired to see Japan avoid plunging into a profitless war which would expose her to foreign annexation, seriously injure the country's finances and affect her internal reforms, but they were also driven by their concern to maintain British commercial interests in Japan. Yet it is impossible to assess just how important British diplomats' advice was in shaping Meiji foreign policy, since at least some of the attitudes expressed by diplomats would have been shared by Japanese leaders. Moreover, it is not easy to find examples of Japanese policy being changed in response to British representations, except where reciprocal concessions were being sought from Britain over treaty revision.

To what extent did British diplomats see Japanese foreign policy through 'Orientalist' eyes? It can be argued that some attitudes which can be categorised as 'Orientalist' were expressed, a prime example being Parkes's tendency to lump the Japanese together with the Chinese in terms of their inconsistency and tortuous behaviour in their early diplomatic negotiations. Moreover, British diplomats were for many years reluctant to recognise Japan's progress by agreeing to treaty revision on terms which would give her status equal to the Western countries. Nevertheless, British diplomats in general often acknowledged Japan's difference from other Asian countries, as when Parkes pointed to the Japanese adoption of Western-style diplomacy; and even if British diplomats regarded Japan as having not yet attained sufficient progress to justify the abrogation of the unequal treaties and place her on an equal footing with the West, they did not ignore the fact that Japan was developing the attributes of a modern state. Moreover, it is clear that some British diplomats, such as Satow, Plunkett and Fraser, were more conciliatory towards Japan in regard to treaty revision and cannot be easily be

accused of 'Orientalism'. Satow, in fact, in view of his belief that Japan would emerge as a leading Power in East Asia, and also the early date at which he came to support treaty revision, may be said to be among the least 'Orientalist' of all British diplomats.

In considering the question of 'Orientalism' it is also important to consider how Japan was rated militarily. Most British diplomats saw her not only as inferior to Western Powers but also as unequal to China. In support of such a view, they pointed to the lack of discipline among Japanese soldiers, to their poor equipment and to the inefficiency of the Japanese military organization, and they claimed that the conscription system could not guarantee a large enough reserve of soldiers to fight a protracted war with other Powers. Despite their apparently logical arguments, however, it is clear from the Japanese successes in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars that British diplomats failed to see how fast Japan was building itself into an effective modern military power, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this blindness was essentially due to 'Orientalist' assumptions.

## CONCLUSION

Early Victorian perceptions of Japan were often quasi-fantasies created by a narrow elite for a middle-class readership. In fact, elements of exotic fantasy were seen as aids to a publication's commercial success. By contrast, diplomatic views and images were to a considerable extent the results of direct experience that brought new ideas to British interpretations of Meiji Japan and allowed at least some of them to rise above the level of stereotypes. Consequently, diplomatic images of Japan were closer to reality. Nevertheless, they were far from uniform and this was due to several factors. These included the substantial number of British officials who were in diplomatic service in Japan, diplomats' personal working experience before coming to Japan, periods of service in Japan, differences in diplomatic rank, different access to Japanese statesmen, Japanese language skill, involvement in scholarly research on Japan, exposure to written works or documents on Japan and diplomats' own personalities.

That British diplomats' views varied, and cannot be categorized simply, has been an important theme of this thesis. For instance, it has been shown that while the modernization, and to some extent Westernisation of Japan in the early Meiji period attracted a good deal of attention from British diplomats, not all modernising or Westernising reforms prompted favourable comments. Although they favoured the structural reforms that introduced Western-style institutions, notably the new cabinet system and Privy Council, the attempt by the radical wing of the People's Rights movement to establish a democratic representative government provoked skeptical remarks, and so did the future working of Japan's constitutional government and the operation of the Diet. These political aims and innovations were considered – or at least asserted – to be inappropriate principally because of Japanese lack of experience and education, although the Meiji Constitution was also regarded with some disfavour because of the marked influence on it of Germany. Similarly as regards social change, while the introduction of Western etiquette in the Japanese Court and the adoption of the Western calendar and holidays were hailed as signs of progress, the same can not be said with regard the adoption of Western costumes by the Japanese as this was seen by the diplomats as ridiculous. Their views on the social, economic and political issues of Meiji Japan, therefore, ranged from critical to commendatory. In addition, one may also note

that while critical comments were generally abundant with regard to Meiji economic development and Japan's future as a military power, more appreciation and admiration were shown by British diplomats of the social reforms effected by the Meiji government.

Apart from highlighting what diplomats saw with favour or, alternatively, disapprovingly, the study of British diplomatic perceptions of the modernisation of Meiji Japan is also interesting for the light it throws on what diplomats considered important or tended to ignore. Particularly high on their list of concerns, not surprisingly, were the security of foreigners in Japan and the persecution of Japanese Christians, especially in the early years of the Meiji period. This is understandable given their concern for foreign interests and Christianity in general. Less predictably, they also showed great interest in the issue of Sat-Cho factionalism in the 1880s, partly perhaps because it was different from British practice, though perhaps more because the question of who was in power was thought to have a direct bearing on the direction and character of Japanese policy, especially towards foreigners. Such instances where the Sat-Cho rivalry was emphasized to the exclusion of other motives were the establishment of a modern cabinet system in 1885, the government dissension in 1887, and the appointment of Ito Hirobumi in 1888 as the President of the Privy Council. In contrast, some developments which historians have emphasized were overlooked or attracted little attention from British diplomats: examples are the Meiji Constitution and its provisions; the details of the *Seitaisho*, the first major Meiji administrative reform, in June 1868; the suppression of Buddhism; the establishment of the early political associations, the *Aikokukōtō* and *Aikokusha*; and also the 1890 election process and its results. There were also issues which the diplomats appear to have totally ignored, such as the Charter Oath of 1868, the launching of the Great Doctrine Promulgation Campaign and the elevation of the Emperor through the creation of the *Jingikan* in 1868-71, the Three Great Laws of 1878, the introduction of suppressive measures to check the growth of the People's Rights movement (notably the establishment of military police (*kempei*) in 1881 and the issuance of the Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors in 1882), the traditionalist response to Westernisation in education as embodied in the Imperial Rescript of 1890, and the influence of Western elements on Japanese popular art and literary trends.

In addition to the difference in emphasis, the thesis also demonstrates that in commenting on modernisation in 1868-90, the diplomats sometimes held different and sometimes similar views. In general, however, British diplomats generally agreed with each other more than they differed. They were at one in their unsympathetic attitude towards popular aspirations for a representative government in the late 1870s and 1880s, in their generally negative view of the development of internal trade and industry in Japan, in their general appraisal of the introduction of modern education, in their appreciation of the adoption of Western etiquette by the Emperor's Court, and in their commendation of the construction of public works and modern communications systems, particularly railways, telegraphs and lighthouses. On the other hand, they differed on such issues as the technical skills of Japanese workers and, more importantly, the appropriateness of treaty revision, with Parkes remaining skeptical that Japan had made sufficient progress for this even though other diplomats acknowledged the reality of change. Similarly, regarding the future of Japan as a competitive commercial rival, particularly in the silk and cotton industries, in contrast to Quin and Troup's favourable comments on Japanese raw silk, Robertson (like them a consul) was skeptical of Japanese ability to compete particularly with silk produced in Europe. Moreover, whereas Troup, Gubbins, and Enslie were dismissive of Japan's competitiveness, especially against imported cotton goods from Britain and India, Longford, Le Poer Trench and Plunkett pointed out various advantages that would assist the rapid growth of the Japanese industry. Similarly, while Hall observed that Japanese silk goods could hardly compete with imported silk goods from Britain and Germany, Quin saw Japan as a potential exporter of manufactured silks to European and American market.

As to whether British diplomats' views and attitudes changed over time as a direct result of developments in Japan, the evidence shows that in some aspects this did happen. For instance, regarding the question of treaty revision and legal reform, a more favourable attitude was shown by British diplomats in the second half of the 1880s as they recognised the progress made by Japan. This may be seen in the positive comments of a number of diplomats such as Satow, Gubbins, Plunkett, Le Poer Trench and Fraser. Similarly, regarding Christianity, British diplomats increasingly expressed their satisfaction with the Meiji government's policy as the latter gradually changed its policy

from persecution in the early years of the Restoration to an accommodating attitude in the 1870s and 1880s. Moreover, British diplomats also gradually came to recognise the increasing skill and knowledge of the Japanese by the 1880s, though Parkes for one continued to make skeptical comments on their working of the Lock hospitals and lighthouses. On the military development of Japan, British diplomatic reports emphasized the inferiority of Japan's military forces in the 1870s but came to see them, albeit only vaguely and sporadically, as posing a possible threat to China in the late 1880s. With regard to the establishment of representative institutions, however, there was, at least superficially, a reverse tendency from a positive to a negative view: in contrast to Parkes's earlier encouragement of a general assembly in the closing years of the Bakufu and early 1868, his later comments, as well as those of his successors in the late 1870s and 1880s, showed a general skepticism about the future success of such a modern institution in Japan. This may have been more apparent than real, however, since the earlier proposal was for an essentially aristocratic baronial council, not for the kind of genuinely elected chamber provided for in the Meiji constitution.

One notable aspect where British diplomats' perceptions hardly evolved with time is with regard to the development of the Japanese economy. A number of positive comments were made by British diplomats, the most notable being Quin and Troup's on Japanese raw silk industry, Longford, Le Poer Trench and Plunkett's on the competitiveness of Japanese cotton manufactures, Quin's favourable view of Japanese silk goods, Dohmen's statement on Japanese woollen manufactures and Longford's positive assessments of the prospects of some Japanese modern light industries, but these were atypical. Most diplomatic comments showed a high degree of continuity, habitually emphasizing the weaknesses, which were seen as making it difficult, if not impossible, for Japan to develop into a modern industrialised country.

As to the speed of modernisation in Japan British diplomats observed that in some respects Japan had acted in a hasty or ill-considered manner. These included the issuance of numerous rules and regulations governing the social conduct of the people, the frequent changes in taxation and the early dismissal of foreign workers in the government service. The diplomatic disapproval of some political changes was also partly due to the speed with which they were introduced. Such a concern may have been a factor in their

generally unsympathetic attitude towards the aspirations of the People's Rights movement and in Parkes and Plunkett's dismissive comments in 1875 on the establishment of a *Genrō-in* or Senate; and it was clearly apparent in Adams's suggestion to Sanjo in 1871 that the government should gradually introduce modern systems rather than implement them all at once, as well as in his concurrence with Kido's comment that Japan should not indiscriminately adopt political institutions which had taken centuries to develop in the West. That some Japanese leaders also favoured a gradual policy lent support to British diplomats' arguments. Kido, for example, admitted in 1871 the government's mistake in establishing the *Shugi-in*, an assembly in which the feudal domains had been represented, and Iwakura stated to Adams that the best course of action for Japan was to steer between the two extremes, namely the conservatives and progressives. Furthermore, there was also an acknowledgement by the Meiji leadership that the Japanese population at large was not yet ready for some Western political institutions.

As to whether the attitudes expressed by diplomats contributed to British general policy towards Japan, it may be argued that they did have some effect as the Foreign Office tended to depend on information from its representatives in Japan. There were various instances where British diplomats in Tokyo were asked to provide their opinions on the state of affairs in Japan, and there were also detailed annual reports by British consuls at the treaty ports. The fact that Britain had larger political and commercial interests than any other Western Power in Japan also meant that the Foreign Office was likely to give weight to the information obtained by the diplomats on Japan. Moreover, given the limited means of communication at that time and the lack of information from other sources, the Foreign Office would have to rely on diplomatic reports for up-to-date information on Japan. Among those which may well have contributed to British policy were the favourable reports by Satow, Plunkett, Fraser, Le Poer Trench and Gubbins in relation to treaty revision. Given the various points put forward by the diplomats, such as the possible alliance between Japan and China, as observed by Satow, and the threat of losing commercial privileges to other Western Powers who were more ready to accommodate Japan's demands, as asserted by Plunkett and Fraser, and also the general progress made by Japan, as maintained by Satow, Plunkett, Gubbins and Le Poer Trench,



it is possible that these helped to induce the British government to agree to a new treaty in 1894. Similarly, Plunkett's favourable comments on the Japanese inclination to establish closer relations with Britain in order to check the expansionist designs of Russia may have partly led to Granville's suggestion of a possible alliance with Japan in 1885, and even contributed to the eventual formation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902.

In view of the widespread acceptance of the concept of 'Orientalism', as popularised by Said, it is relevant to see British diplomats in Japan as a test case of the idea, at least in the universal way that Said and others have implied 'Orientalism', and in particular to ask whether Japan's assimilation of material and practical features of Occidental life were regarded as doomed to failure because of an innate feeling of Western superiority as against Eastern backwardness. Given the various views by British diplomats covering different issues, generalisation is clearly not easy. Some comments by diplomats may indicate an 'Orientalist' attitude. They tended, for instance, to see Japan as mainly a primary producer of agricultural products rather than as an emerging industrial state and to underestimate Japan's potential as an economic competitor. They similarly emphasized the inferiority of Japanese military forces and for at least a decade treated Japan's attempts to achieve treaty revision as premature or even misguided. On the other hand, some British diplomatic comments were unaffected by 'Orientalism'. In this category one might place their praise for the Japanese enthusiasm for learning, the favourable views by Longford, Le Poer Trench and Plunkett on Japan's competitiveness in the cotton industry, Quin's positive appraisal of Japan's silk manufactures, Fraser's dismissal of the supposed serious disadvantages of the traditional Japanese *shosha* system, and, above all, the favourable comments by Gubbins, Plunkett and Le Poer Trench on Japan's general progress in comparison with other Oriental countries.

Among British diplomats, one may also note different degrees of 'Orientalism'. Perhaps the most clearly 'Orientalist' was Parkes, who persisted in seeing Japan's future as that of a primary producer, as shown in his 1880 comment that Japan should concentrate on developing her agricultural and mineral resources rather than wasting time and money in manufacturing industry. Nor was this all, as he held the view that Japan needed foreign advice in matters of foreign trade and required foreign engineers and skilled workers. On Japan's foreign policy, his negative views far exceeded other

diplomats' as he lumped Japan and China together as Oriental states, which shared a tortuous and inconsistent approach to diplomacy, and stressed Japan's inferiority in military strength to China.

As to other diplomats, they may be categorised as mildly 'Orientalist' as their negative comments on Japan were less condemnatory and less consistent than Parkes. Plunkett, for instance, though skeptical of some changes in Japan, saw with favour the adoption of the modern cabinet system and Japan's treaty revision. His successor, Fraser, was also favourable towards Japan's desire for treaty revision and in another instance, discounted the adverse effects of the *shosha* system on foreign trade. Le Poer Trench also admitted Japan's progress in the 1880s and praised the Japanese Privy Council or *Sumitsu-in* as resembling the House of Lords in Britain. Gubbins, for his part, perceived Japanese Diet members as holding ignorant and reckless views, and saw the inclusion of nobles and peasants in the membership of the House of Peers or Upper House as bold rather than wise. Nevertheless, unlike Parkes, he was prepared to recognise Japan's general progress when considering her readiness for treaty revision. A similar categorisation may perhaps be applied to the consuls and acting-consuls in the treaty ports, as their comments, particularly on the social and economic development of Japan, included both negative and positive views. As to the least 'Orientalist' of British diplomats, Satow's name stands out as his views were at times either slightly 'Orientalist' or not 'Orientalist' at all. One instance of the former is his view on the establishment of a representative government in Japan whereby he at first expressed some skepticisms but later advised Japanese leaders to experiment with the idea anyway. Similarly, with regard to the issue of treaty revision, although he was initially pessimistic about Japanese preparedness to exercise modern jurisprudence, he then voiced the desirability of the revision in view of the progress in Japan. As to his 'non-Orientalist' views, Satow for example had once clearly expressed his belief that Japan would become a future leading East Asian Power.

Among the factors, which arguably contributed to 'Orientalist' views among British diplomats were their personal temperament and personality, their period of service in Japan and also their previous working experience before coming to Japan. As to personal temperament, a few examples may be mentioned. To begin with, Parkes's

notoriously domineering and very quick-tempered personality<sup>1</sup> may partly explain his tendency to express forthright and critical comments on Japan. In contrast, Fraser, as described by his wife, Mary Crawford Fraser, 'was of philosophic temperament and he never wasted time and effort in complaint, when complaint was useless,'<sup>2</sup> and this may partly explain his more moderate comments on Japan. Regarding Satow, he is known to have had a natural liking for Japanese ways of life like drinking sake and even to have had a Japanese as his (unofficial) wife. As to the diplomats' period of service in Japan, only Parkes and Fraser had previously served for a long period in China. During his twenty years of residence in that country, Parkes witnessed great reluctance on the part of the Chinese to modernise. Against this background, there may have been a tendency to discount Japan's proclaimed progressive ambitions. On the other hand, the lack of a substantial background in China or other Asian countries did not prevent other British diplomats from displaying an 'Orientalist' attitude, nor can Fraser's nine years' service in China explain his positive view or Gower's three years' experience in China justify his moderate attitude towards Japan. Fraser's seven years' working experience in several countries in Central and South America may have led him to view developments in Japan as more encouraging though the same can not be said about Gower since the only country where he served before coming to Japan was China.

Furthermore, the period during which Parkes served in Japan (1865-1883) was one when only limited progress was evident in Japan's economy, legal and political systems, and when mistakes were being made by the Meiji government, may have also exacerbated his negative view on Japan. In contrast, many of the other diplomats either arrived at a later period when there were more clear-cut signs of improvement or had had experience of seeing the results of change in the 1880s, and this may have contributed to their milder or more favourable views. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions since this factor would not explain the less 'Orientalist' attitude of some diplomats like Troup, Robertson, Lowder, Gower, Flowers, Fletcher, Dohmen, and Aston or the least 'Orientalist' attitude of Satow, who had arrived in Japan even earlier than Parkes. Furthermore, looking at the diplomats' duration of service in Japan, it also appeared that

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<sup>1</sup> Nish, *Britain and Japan*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cortazzi, H. (ed.), *A Diplomat's Wife in Japan, Sketches at the Turn of the Century* (Tokyo: Weatherhill), 1982, p. xxvii.

the longer a diplomat worked in the country, the less critical he was towards the modernisation of Japan. Satow, Longford, Aston, Gubbins, Euslie, Hall, Quin and Troup were among those whose service in Japan exceeded twenty years. Again, generalization is not always that simple since it did not justify Parkes' attitude despite having to stay and work in Japan for nearly twenty years. Finally, another factor that may well have influenced British diplomats towards 'Orientalist' views was the fact that in seeking modernisation and international equality, Japanese leaders were aiming at targets which no other Oriental government had sought or yet achieved.

Despite what may be seen as 'Orientalist' comments, it would be erroneous to see British diplomats as exemplifying 'Orientalism' in its most straightforward guise, that is as Westerners who regarded Meiji Japan as a politically, socially and economically backward state, which had no hope of progress. Even Parkes may not be regarded as a crude 'Orientalist' as he recognised Japan's ability to develop a modern political system, though only through a gradual process. Similarly, though he was critical of Japan's current capacity to operate lighthouses and hospitals, he did indicate that, given sufficient time and experience, the Japanese could dispense with their foreign workers and rely on their own countrymen. Despite his tendency to criticise, he also made a number of appreciative comments on some Japanese qualities, such as the Japanese anxious desire to learn and acquire knowledge, and on such material achievements as the construction of railways and telegraphs. Moreover, the fact that the Meiji leaders themselves sometimes admitted the underdeveloped state of their country's political, economic and social system, as well as the weakness of their military forces, makes it difficult to regard diplomatic feelings of Western superiority as being based purely on prejudice and wholly unjustified. Such instances included the insistence by Iwakura, Ito and Okuma on the lack of sufficient education and experience among their own people to allow the establishment of a parliamentary system in the 1870s and 1880s, Iwakura's statement acknowledging the inferiority of Japanese to Western civilization following his return from the tour to Europe and the United States, and also remarks by Ito, Inoue and Katsu Awa hinting at the unpreparedness of Japan for a foreign war. The fact that the Meiji government made requests to the British Legation for assistance in providing teachers, engineers, advisers and military instructors, as well as places for Japanese students and military cadets in

Britain, also indicated the Japanese recognition of the underdeveloped state of Japan compared to the modern Western countries.

Apart from revealing the ways in which they perceived Japan's modernisation, the reports of British diplomats are also significant in that they provide first-hand information on the social, economic, and political development of Japan. As observers who were in some respects in a privileged position, as a result of their conversations with Japanese leaders such as Iwakura, Ito, Inoue, Terajima, Sanjo and Soejima, they were particularly well placed to assess the motives and aims of the principal Meiji statesmen in 1868-1890. In addition to the views which the latter expressed about internal developments and problems, they also made various statements about the political, financial and military factors which shaped the country's foreign policy. Diplomats' reports of these conversations sometimes provide insights into the ideas and opinions of policy-makers and are worthy of attention by historians. One instance is Iwakura's remarkable, albeit questionable, assertion to Adams in 1871 that the main cause of the Meiji Ishin was the *Dai Nihon Shi*, the multi-volume history of Japan compiled by scholars of the Mito domain. Even more significant, arguably, is Iwakura's admission to Satow in late 1871 that the Meiji government had been so apprehensive that the abolition of the *han* would lead to bloodshed that it had at first seemed that it would take 500 years before the measure could be effected. Also in this category is Kido's previously mentioned confession to Satow in 1871 that in establishing the *Shugi-in*, Japan had adopted Western institutions over-hastily. Worthy of note, too, is Ito and Inoue's suggestion to Plunkett that the government might possibly favour the promotion of Christianity in Japan following the visit of the papal legate in 1885, as they wished to project Japan as a modern and liberal country.

British diplomatic dispatches also contain some extremely interesting comments by Meiji leaders relating to Japanese foreign policy. One such is Satow's 1880 report of Iwakura's support of the idea of an Eastern cooperation when the Japanese statesman stated to a Korean visitor that he had long desired to induce Korea into an alliance of China, Japan and Korea. Another fascinating insight into the thinking of Meiji leaders is to be found in Kennedy's report in 1880 of a conversation with Inoue in which the latter suggested that it might be better for China to be defeated by a Western Power; the

country might then begin, the Japanese foreign minister speculated, to adopt modern reforms, thus not only helping to strengthen China against future attacks but also to safeguard Japan from foreign threats. Although this was atypical in that Inoue generally regarded war between China and Western Powers as potentially dangerous to Japan, it showed the willingness of the Meiji leadership to consider different foreign policy strategies or approaches. Equally intriguing, and similarly not known to historians, was Inoue's suggestion to Plunkett in 1887 of a tripartite alliance between China, Japan and Britain.

With regard to British diplomatic advice to Meiji leaders, Parkes stood out from other diplomats in adopting an outspoken approach. Not only did he urge the implementation of free trade, gradual reform in politics, the construction of railways and telegraphs, and toleration towards Christianity, he also frequently counselled Meiji leaders on the direction of Japan's foreign policy. Perhaps his overbearing manner, seniority, experience and knowledge of East Asian affairs explained his unusually forthcoming approach. Although other diplomats such as Plunkett, Adams, Satow, Kennedy and Fraser sometimes tendered their opinions to the Meiji leaders, their advice was not as frequent or direct as Parkes's, while other consuls and acting-consuls appeared to have confined their recommendations for improvement of some aspects of Japan mainly to their reports. While their advice may have influenced the direction taken by the Meiji leaders, it is difficult to assess the extent of their influence as there were other factors that shaped the Japanese government's policy. Moreover, the Meiji leaders also obtained advice from the foreign advisers they employed in different ministries, as well as from other foreign representatives in Tokyo.

In giving their advice and offering assistance, British diplomats were concerned not only with the development of Japan but also the protection of British interests and influence, especially in view of the rivalry for influence with other Western Powers in Japan. Their perceptions of Japan were, thus, sometimes influenced by whether Japan turned to Britain or to other Western Powers in seeking models for reform. This may be seen in Plunkett's criticisms of Japan's pro-German tendency in promulgating the Meiji constitution, in British diplomats' insistence on the Japanese navy's adherence to a British model, in their emphasis on the learning and use of the English language in Japanese

educational institutions and in Japan's future law courts, in their stress on the importance of retaining foreign workers by the Meiji government, and in Plunkett's remonstrance against the supposed attempts by Germany to take over Japanese railway contracts from British firms. Similarly, in matters of foreign policy, in advising Japan to follow the British lead in East Asian politics and not to involve herself in a war with China or Korea, British diplomats were undoubtedly aware that unwanted developments such as Japanese alliance with other Foreign Powers or a war between Japan and her neighbours might provide an opportunity for Russian encroachment and that this would affect British interests and influence in East and Central Asia.

Nevertheless, not all diplomatic advice and offers of foreign assistance were the results of diplomats' initiatives. There were times when Japanese leaders made the first moves in seeking advice and foreign aid. Such an instance was the request by a Japanese minister to Watson for advice on the opening of a railway line. There were also requests by the Japanese government to the British Legation to provide them with British naval instructors, engineers, teachers and other skilled workers. On one occasion in 1869, Iwakura asked for Parkes's opinion on the best course for Japan in adopting Western civilization, and in the 1880s there were several instances when Inoue requested Plunkett's advice in respect to Japan's foreign relations.

Interestingly, much of the valuable information gained by British diplomats was a result of Meiji leaders confiding in British diplomats. There were several motivations for Japanese leaders in doing so. One was Japanese need for the diplomats' advice in order to ensure that their painstaking efforts in the modernisation of their politics, economic and society conformed to modern practices in the advanced countries. Such a confirmation was necessary not simply because they aspired to become a modern and strong state like the leading countries in the West but also to end the humiliating unequal treaties imposed on Japan by the West. Besides, the Japanese statesmen may have also felt that they lacked the necessary experience to choose the best systems for the country and the British diplomats could provide some guidelines. By confiding in the British diplomats the Meiji leaders could convey a message that Japan was undergoing changes and therefore, would one day be eligible for treaty revision. Similarly, through this means the Meiji leaders could also hope to obtain sympathy and understanding from British diplomats especially

in relation to some controversial and complicated issues like Christianity in Japan - to understand the difficulties faced by the Meiji government to end immediately the ban on Christianity.

Moreover, the fact that the diplomats were officials of a leading Western Power with high prestige and reputation may have also been a factor in that a favorable attitude shown by British diplomats towards Japan would be likely to influence representatives of other Western countries in Japan to take similar attitude. Furthermore, a positive response by British diplomats might well influence their government to soften its policy towards Japan. Similarly, any discouraging responses from British diplomats could have been viewed by Japanese statesmen as possible obstacles in winning the hearts of Western countries including Britain especially in abrogating the undesired unequal treaties.

In dealing with other countries too, Japanese leaders consulted and confided in British diplomats, perhaps because of the latter's vast experience in international diplomacy and that they wanted Japanese foreign policy to be in line with international diplomacy of the leading Western countries. In disclosing information on Japanese foreign policy the Meiji leaders might have also aimed to assure the diplomats of the friendly policy of the Meiji government towards Britain and other Western Powers. Even when conflicts seemed to be imminent with neighboring countries like China and Korea, the Japanese leaders used to confer with British diplomats, perhaps to justify Japan's occasionally bold policy towards these countries and thus prevent alienation of Japan from the West.

Nevertheless, not all British diplomats could have claimed to have good personal contact with Meiji leaders. One who could was British Minister Harry Parkes, who, though he was stern and harsh in dealing with Japanese leaders enjoyed considerable access to the latter perhaps because of his very considerable experience of East Asian affairs and his high reputation among foreign representatives in Japan. He was also the longest serving British Minister in Japan and he was present during the crucial years of the early Meiji period when the foundations for a modern Japan were being laid. A diplomat with a more friendly relationship with the Japanese was the British Legation's Secretary, Ernest Satow, who engaged in many informal conversations with Japanese due to his ability to communicate in Japanese. It was through these conversations that many



new ideas about modernisation of Meiji Japan came to be known. Another person worthy of mention was Francis Ottiwell Adams, the Legation's Secretary and also British Chargé d'Affaires for some time, who, despite his inability to communicate in Japanese and lack of prestige and reputation compared to Parkes's, was able to hold many talks with leading Japanese particularly Iwakura Tomomi. His interest in securing in-depth knowledge of what was happening in Japan led him, accompanied with competent interpreters, to pay many less formal visits to the Japanese leader with the result that he felt able to describe the character of Iwakura in some depth and compare him with other Japanese.<sup>3</sup> Last but not least was British Minister Francis Plunkett who often had conversations and discussions with Ito and Inoue. It may have been his less critical attitude that attracted the Japanese leaders to seek advice from him and disclose information especially in matters of foreign policy, and perhaps also the fact that he was there in the greater part of the 1880s during which Japan experienced serious issues like deteriorating relations with China and negotiations for treaty revision.

Not all Japanese leaders were ready to disclose information to British diplomats. With the exception of Iwakura and Soejima, those who were likely to confide in the diplomats were the ones who spoke and understood English well. This was especially true of Ito and Inoue, who often engaged in conversations with British diplomats. Kido and Okubo, by contrast, rarely conferred with British diplomats, perhaps owing to their limited English. As reported by Adams, "Kido is a man of exceedingly quiet demeanour, but of the most fearless courage," while "(Okubo) He is little known to Foreigners, and is not very communicative."<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, given the distinctiveness of British diplomatic views and images in 1868-90, it is hoped that the findings of this thesis will contribute to the study of Meiji Japan. Through their formal and informal contacts with Meiji leaders, Japanese language skill, scholarly study and research on Japan, etc, the diplomats were able to gain insights into the modernisation of Meiji Japan which sometimes escaped the attention of Western

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<sup>3</sup> Adams wrote, "Iwakura is the type of a Japanese gentleman. His manners are courtly and his politeness is exquisite. He is well versed in the history of his country, and he treats questions broadly, without that tendency to quibble and to wander from the point which is a characteristic of so many Japanese. He listens attentively to what is said, and states his opinions clearly and decidedly." FO 46/151, No. 29, Adams to Granville, Yedo, Jan. 29, 1872.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

visitors and writers. Such insights related in particular to the differences of views among Meiji leaders on the pace and extent of reforms, internal power struggles and *han*-based factional divisions in Japanese politics, problems of modernisation as seen and acknowledged by Japanese leaders themselves, Japanese views of Western progress vis-à-vis their own, and Japan's position in East Asian politics.

Similarly, it is hoped that the findings will also contribute to the history of the image of Japan in Western minds. In contrast to the stereotyped images of Japan which were widespread among Westerners, those held by British diplomats were generally better informed and more realistic. Instead of seeing Japan as a topsy-turvy country where everything was different from the West, or as an Eastern paradise inhabited by geisha and little people, or as a difficult and unrewarding place for Western traders, British diplomats presented a variety of interesting images of Japan and its people. These included images related to social, economic and political life of Meiji Japan and foreign policy such as Japanese desire to imitate Western social and political system, Japanese desire for expansionism and many more.

Moreover, through their official capacity as diplomats, their views also contribute to the knowledge of British policy and diplomatic history towards Japan. The thesis findings for instance, demonstrate that the British earlier bold policy towards Japan gradually changed to be more favorable where more concessions were made by Britain in negotiating for the revision of the unequal treaties. This gradual shift of policy to some extent due to the diplomats' positive views of Japan's progress as contained in their official reports to the Whitehall and also the diplomats' concern for British political and commercial interests in Japan as opposed to the interests of other Western Powers. Nevertheless, given the subjectivity of the issue of the influence of diplomatic views on general British policy towards Japan, it is hoped that the findings of this thesis would arouse serious attempts to carry out investigations into the issue.

## APPENDIX

### Career Biographies of British Diplomats in Japan.

**Adams, Sir Francis Ottiwell** – was appointed Attaché at Stockholm, February 1, 1854; at St. Petersburg, May 14, 1856; 3<sup>rd</sup> Paid Attaché at Tehran, July 24, 1858; was appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Paid Attaché at St. Petersburg, December 2, 1858; was transferred to Paris, July 8, 1859; was appointed a 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary, October 1, 1862; was transferred to Washington, June 1, 1864; and to Paris, May 5, 1866, where he was Chargé d’Affaires from July 1 to July 5, and from August 8 to August 11, 1867; was promoted to be Secretary of Legation in Japan, January 6, 1868; was Acting Chargé d’Affaires at Yedo from May 23, 1871 till May 25, 1872. Was promoted to be Secretary of Embassy at Berlin, February 15, 1872, where he was Acting Chargé d’Affaires from July 4 till October 12, 1873; and from July 4 till October 6, 1874. Was transferred to Paris, December 5, 1874, where he was accredited as Minister Plenipotentiary in the absence of the Ambassador, and acted as such from April 7 till May 14, 1875; from September 1 till October 10, 1875; from April 14 to 19, 1876; from April 24 till June 3, 1876; from August 4 till October 20, 1877; from March 6 till April 6, 1878; from August 19 to September 29, 1878; from August 12 till November 6, 1879; from May 5 to 13, 1880; from July 18 till October 1, 1880; and from July 19 till September 17, 1881. Was appointed a Minister Plenipotentiary in the Diplomatic Service, October 10, 1879; was promoted to be Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Berne, July 8, 1881. Retired on May 1, 1888.  
(FO LISTS 1889)

**Alcock, Sir Rutherford** – was Surgeon of the Marine Brigade of Portugal from July, 1833, till the close of 1834, and served all through the Portuguese War under Don Pedro. Was appointed Deputy Inspector-General of Hospitals in the British Auxiliary Legion, May 5, 1835 till the close of 1837. Was British Commissioner for the Adjudication of the Claims of the British Auxiliary Legion, from May, 1839 to March, 1840. Was British Commissioner in the Mixed British and Portuguese Commission of Claims, from March 26, 1840, till he was appointed Consul at Foochow, in China, May 30, 1844; was transferred to Shanghai, December 10, 1846; and to Canton, August 10, 1854. Was appointed Consul-General in Japan, December 21, 1858, and Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary and Consul-General there, November 30, 1859. Owing to his differences with the Japanese Government, Mr. Alcock temporarily removed the British Legation from Yedo to Yokohama from January 26 till March 2, 1861. Was appointed Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, March 28, 1865, and Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Peking, April 7, 1865. Retired on July 22, 1871.  
(FO LISTS 1889)

**Annesley, Adolphus Arthur** – served in the Royal Navy as Naval Cadet and Midshipman, from June 9, 1846, till March 8, 1849. Was afterwards employed in the British Consulate at Amsterdam; was appointed an Extra Clerk in the Admiralty, April 26, 1855; was appointed Assistant in the Consulate at Nagasaki, in Japan, February 12, 1859, and was in charge of the Consulate as Acting Vice-Consul from June 1 till July 26, 1861; from November 2 till December 15, 1865; from May 15 till May 29, and from November 3 till December 31, 1866. Was promoted to be a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant, November 2, 1866 (appointment to date from April 1, 1867). Was appointed Her Majesty’s Vice-Consul at Hyogo and Osaka, July 6, 1869; was Acting British and Austrian Consul at Nagasaki, and in charge of French, Italian, and Spanish interests, from October 13, 1869, till October 10, 1871; and at Hyogo and Osaka, from August 1, 1874, till November 10, 1877. Was promoted to be Consul at Reunion, November 29, 1878; and was appointed Consul for the State of Maine, to reside at Portugal, October 30, 1882. Retired on January 1, 1885.  
(FO LISTS 1885)

**Aston, William George** – Was appointed a Student Interpreter in Japan, August 16, 1864; was made a 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant, May 11, 1869; a 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant, July 8, 1869; and was appointed Interpreter and Translator to the Legation at Yedo, October 6, 1870. Was Acting-Japanese Secretary from August 8 till December 1, 1870.

Was in attendance on the Japanese Mission in this country from August 8 till December 16, 1872. Was Assistant Japanese Secretary at Yedo from April 1, 1875, till April 1, 1882, when he was appointed Consul at Nagasaki. Was Acting Consul at Hyogo from February 10, 1880, till December 23, 1881; from January 5 to June 2, 1882; from July 14 to August 7, 1882; from October 27, 1882, to February 28, 1883; and from June 21 to October 5, 1883. Was appointed, provisionally, Consul-General for Korea, March 17, 1884; and Japanese Secretary at Tokyo, May 20, 1886. Was given the local rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary to the Legation at Tokyo, September 21, 1887. Retired on June 1, 1889.  
(FO LISTS 1897)

**Bunsen, Maurice William Ernest de, Bart** – was nominated an Attaché, July 1877; appointed to Washington, November 1, 1878. Promoted to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Secretary, September 1, 1879; transferred to Berne, November 9, 1881, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from November 12, 1881, to January 3, 1882; and to Madrid, January 3, 1882. Promoted to be 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary, April 1, 1883. Was Acting Chargé d'Affaires at Madrid from January 25 to February 4, 1884; from April 2 to August 16, 1884; from December 30, 1884, to March 6, 1885; and from July 12 to November 30, 1885. Transferred to Paris, January 26, 1886. Temporarily attached to the Legation at Lisbon from July 31 to September 16, 1887, and acted there as Chargé d'Affaires from August 9 to September 14, 1887. Promoted to be Secretary of Legation at Tokyo, January 1, 1891, where he acted as Chargé d'Affaires from June 28, 1892, to February 25, 1894. Promoted to be Chargé d'Affaires and Consul-General in Siam, August 6, 1894. Appointed Secretary of Embassy at Washington, December 7, 1896; and Secretary of Embassy at Constantinople, January 7, 1897, where he acted as Chargé d'Affaires from May 27 to September 21, 1898; from September 13, 1900, to January 12, 1901; from November 23 to December 24, 1901; and from June 10 to August 29, 1902. Appointed Secretary of Embassy at Paris and a Minister Plenipotentiary in the Diplomatic Service, August 9, 1902. Was Minister Plenipotentiary at Paris, from March 29 to April 4, and July 6 to 19, 1903. Appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Lisbon, March 6, 1905. Promoted to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at Madrid, February 10, 1906. Transferred to Vienna, November 1, 1913. Acted as an Assistant Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office from March 15, 1915, to December 31, 1918. Retired on January 1, 1919.  
(FO LISTS 1919)

**Dohmen, Martin** – was temporarily employed in the Consular Service in Japan from April 1 till September 21, 1861, when he was permanently appointed; was appointed Supernumerary Interpreter to the Consulate at Kanagawa, November 25, 1861; was appointed Interpreter at Kanagawa, January 25, 1864; was attached to the Legation, was Acting Japanese Secretary, April 1, 1864; was Post Office Agent from 1862 till 1865; served under the Japanese Government as Director of the Municipality of Yokohama with the rank of Vice Governor, from October 11, 1867, till June 3, 1868; was appointed Assistant Accountant and Dutch Interpreter at Yedo, January 1, 1868, and joined the Legation, July 1, 1868. Was for some time 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant at Kanagawa, and was appointed Her Majesty's Vice-Consul Councillor at Yedo (Tokyo), August 17, 1871. Was Acting Austrian Consul in 1871, and Acting British Consul at Yokohama from April 8, 1870.  
(FO LISTS 1882)

**Enslie, James Joseph** – was appointed Interpreter in the Consular Service in Japan, March 16, 1861; was Acting Consul at Hakodate, from August 13, 1861, till June 1, 1863; was attached to the Surveying Squadron in the Inland Sea and Straits of Shimonoseki, as Interpreter, from July 19 till August 10, 1864. Was in charge of the Hakodate Consulate on several other occasions; was transferred to the Hyogo Consulate, January 1868, where he acted as Japanese Interpreter till February 17, 1869, when he was appointed Acting Vice-Consul for Hyogo and Osaka. Was Acting Consul at Niigata from May 27 till October 29, 1872; and has been Acting Vice-Consul at Hyogo and Osaka since November 8, 1872.  
(FO LISTS 1874)

**Eusden, Richard** – was appointed Dutch Interpreter at Yedo, January 17, 1859; was Acting Vice-Consul there from July 22, 1859, till December 7, 1860, when he was appointed Japanese Secretary and Interpreter to the British Legation at Yedo; was in charge of the Consulate-General from September 24 till October 20,

1859; was Acting Consul at Hakodate from March 10 till September 10, 1861; was present on the attack at the Legation at Yedo, June 26, 1862, and at the action at Kagoshima, August 15, 1863; was in charge of the Legation at Yedo from October 1 to 29, and from November 3 till December 25, 1865; was attached to the Supreme Court at Shanghai from December 15, 1866, till May 2, 1867; was sent to Hakodate to act as Consul, July 20, 1867; was appointed Consul at Hakodate, January 1, 1868. Retired on April 1, 1882. (FO LISTS 1897)

**Flowers, Marcus Octavius** – served in the British Consulate at Amsterdam from 1844; had charge of the Consulate on several occasions; was appointed Unpaid Vice-Consul there, November 22, 1856; was Acting Consul from June 16 till December 15, 1858; from May 18, 1859, till February 2, 1860; and from May 14 till June 14, 1860. Was appointed Interpreter at Kanagawa, February 19, 1861; was promoted to be Vice-Consul at Yokohama, April 1, 1864; was Acting Consul from December 24, 1864, till January 4, 1866, when he was transferred to the Nagasaki Consulate as officiating Consul, and took charge, February 10, 1866. Was promoted to be Consul at Hakodate, May 3, 1867; was transferred to Niigata, January 1, 1868; to Nagasaki, July 9, 1868; and to Hyogo and Osaka, April 1, 1877. Retired on March 24, 1882. (FO LISTS 1885)

**Fletcher, Lachland** – was appointed Student Interpreter at Yedo, December 30, 1858; was attached to the Legation at Yedo till June 1860, when he was appointed Acting Second Assistant at Hakodate. Was Acting Consul at Hakodate, from October 1860 till March 1861, when he was appointed Second Assistant. Was transferred to Nagasaki, September, 1861; was present at the action at Kagoshima in September 1863 as interpreter to summon Japanese commanders to deliver up their steamers; was promoted to be a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant, November 26, 1866 (appointment to date from April 1, 1867); and Consul at Yedo and Kanagawa, January 1, 1868. (FO LISTS 1869)

**Fraser, Hugh** – was appointed Attaché at the Hague, January 15, 1855; at Dresden, February 23, 1855; at Copenhagen, November 19, 1857; at Berlin, January 26, 1860; was appointed Paid Attaché to the Legation in Central America, September 21, 1861; was promoted to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Second Secretary, October 1, 1862; was transferred to Stockholm, June 25, 1864; but was Chargé d'Affaires at Guatemala from April 19, 1864, till August 8, 1865. Was transferred as 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary to Berlin, June 26, 1866; did not proceed thither, but retained his appointment at Stockholm. Was transferred to Peking, January 14, 1867, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from November 2 till November 28, 1869. Was transferred to St. Petersburg, February 13, 1871 (but did not proceed); and to Florence, July 1, 1871. Was promoted to be Secretary of Legation at Peking, April 24, 1874, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from June 7, 1876, till February 28, 1879. Was promoted to be Secretary of Embassy at Vienna, November 8, 1879, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from August 3 till December 14, 1881. Was transferred to Rome, February 23, 1882, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from September 1 to October 22, 1882; and from July 16 to December 22, 1883. Was promoted to be Minister Resident and Consul-General at Santiago, February 17, 1885; and Envoy Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary, and Consul-General at Tokyo, April 30, 1888. (FO LISTS 1894)

**Gower, Abel Anthony James** – went out to China in April 1856 as Private Secretary to the Governor of Hong Kong; was appointed 4<sup>th</sup> Assistant in the Superintendency of Trade, May 27, 1856, and discharged both duties until the early part of 1858, when he was promoted to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant in the Canton Consulate, where he discharged the duties of 1<sup>st</sup> and only Assistant; and was appointed 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant in the Consulate-General at Yedo, in February 1859, where he also discharged the duties of Secretary of Legation. Was present at the attacks on the Legation in 1861 and 1862; also present at the action at Kagoshima in 1863. Was Acting Consul at Nagasaki from April 1864 till May 25, 1865, when he was appointed Consul at Hakodate, but remained at Nagasaki till March 7, 1866. Was appointed Consul at Nagasaki, May 8, 1867, and transferred to Hyogo and Osaka, July 9, 1868. Retired on June 1, 1876.

(FO LISTS 1877)

**Griffiths, Ernest Alfred** – was appointed Student Interpreter in Japan, April 7, 1884; Acting Consul at Nagasaki in 1887 and 1888. Promoted to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Assistant, October 1, 1888. Acting-Vice-Consul at Tokyo from October 17, 1888 to April 15, 1891; and Acting Consul at Hyogo in 1893. Promoted to be a 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant, August 8, 1896. Promoted Acting-Consul at Tainan from 1896 to 1900; Acting Consul at Tainan from November 24, 1896, to January 2, 1897; and from July 10, 1897, to December 3, 1899; Acting Consul at Hyogo in 1900. Again Acting Consul at Tainan in 1902 and 1903. Promoted to be Vice-Consul at Hyogo and Osaka, May 21, 1903; Acting Consul at Kobe in 1903 and 1904. Promoted to be Consul for the Consular District of Shimonoseki, December 22, 1904. Retired, December 9, 1912.  
(FO LISTS 1913)

**Gubbins, John Harrington** – was appointed Student Interpreter in Japan, April 14, 1871; promoted to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Assistant, April 30, 1875; Acting Vice-Consul at Yedo in 1879 and 1880; promoted to be a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant, August 6, 1882. Was attached in April 1886, as English Secretary to the Conference at Tokyo for the Revision of Treaties. Acting Vice-Consul at Tokyo in 1887 and 1888. Acting Consul at Yokohama in 1888. Acting Assistant Japanese Secretary at Tokyo from October 2, 1884, to February 8, 1886, and from May 28, 1887, to October 1, 1888, when he was promoted to be Assistant Japanese Secretary. Acting Japanese Secretary from January 1, 1883, to October 1, 1884; from February 9, 1886, to May 27, 1887; and from November 8, 1888, to June 1, 1889, when he was promoted to be Japanese Secretary. Given the local rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary to the Legation at Tokyo, February 13, 1890. Employed at the Foreign Office from February to July, 1894, in the negotiations which resulted in the conclusion of the Treaty with Japan of July 16, 1894. Was a British Delegate on the Tariff Commission appointed for the negotiation of the supplementary Convention with Japan of July, 1895. Acting Chargé d'Affaires in Korea from May 18, 1900, to November 4, 1901. Given the local rank of Secretary of Legation in the Diplomatic Service, June 26, 1902. Retired, September 10, 1909.  
(FO LISTS 1913)

**Hall, John Carey** – was appointed a Student Interpreter in Japan, December 24, 1867. Was for some time Acting-Consul at Yedo. Promoted to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Assistant, January 1, 1872; a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, April 1, 1872; and a 1<sup>st</sup> Class, April 1, 1877. Appointed Assistant Japanese Secretary at Tokyo, April 1, 1882; Acting Consul at Nagasaki on various occasions in 1882, 1883, 1884 and 1886; Acting Japanese Secretary at Tokyo, from October 2, 1884, to January 8, 1886; and from January 25 to February 8, 1886. Acting Registrar and Interpreter at Yokohama Court, from February 15 to November 12, 1886. Acting Consul at Yokohama from November 13, 1886, to April 20, 1888. Acting Judge of H.M. Court for Japan at Yokohama from April 21 to May 10, 1888, and Acting Assistant Judge of H.M. Supreme Court for China and Japan at Shanghai, from May 19, 1888, to May 13, 1889. Promoted to be Consul for Hakodate and Niigata, October 1, 1888; Acting Consul at Nagasaki from November 5, 1890, to February 11, 1892; and at Yokohama in 1895 and 1896. Transferred to Formosa, February 4, 1896 (did not proceed), and to Hyogo, as Consul for Higo and Osaka, August 21, 1896. A fresh Commission was issued appointing Mr. Hall to be Consul for Hyogo, July 28, 1897. Appointed a Companion of the I.S.O., November 9, 1902. Promoted to be Consul-General for Kanagawa, May 21, 1903.  
(FO LISTS 1913)

**Hodgson, Christopher Pemberton** – was Unpaid Vice-Consul at Pan, in the Consular District of Bayonne, France, from October 15, 1851, till March 17, 1855; was appointed Vice-Consul at Caen, March 12, 1857; and Consul at Hakodate, in Japan, February 21, 1859, which post he held till March 1861. Was Her Majesty's officiating Consul at Nagasaki, from June 13 till October, 1859, where he was also Acting French Consul.  
(FO LISTS 1865)

**Kennedy, Sir John Gordon** – was nominated Attaché, December 10, 1857; was appointed to Mexico, March 5, 1858; was temporarily attached to the Embassy at Paris, from June 2 till August 14, 1858, when he was permanently appointed to that Embassy; was transferred to Vienna, June 28, 1859; and to Washington, April 19, 1862; was promoted to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Secretary, March 225, 1863; was transferred to Vienna, February 25, 1865; was promoted to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary at Bogota, October 25, 1865 (but did not proceed thither); and to Constantinople, February 2, 1866. Was transferred to Brussels, August 21, 1871; and to Rome, August 3, 1874. Was promoted to be Secretary of Legation at Yedo, August 7, 1878, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from October 12, 1879, to January 25, 1882; and to be Secretary of Embassy at St. Petersburg, September 1, 1881, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from August 13 to October 22, 1883. Was transferred to Rome, March 14, 1885, where he acted as Chargé d'Affaires from March 30 to October 2, 1887; from January 16 to March 15, 1888; and from May 27, 1888, to January 2, 1889. Was promoted to be Minister Resident and Consul-General at Santiago, October 1, 1888; and Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the King of Romania, August 6, 1897. Retired, December 8, 1905.  
(FO LISTS 1906)

**Longford, Joseph Henry** – was appointed a Student Interpreter in Japan, February 24, 1869; Acting 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant at Kanagawa in 1871 and 1872. Promoted to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Assistant, June 1, 1872; and a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant, April 1, 1882. Nominated, provisionally, Vice-Consul at Tokyo, September 9, 1884; and appointed to that post, May 20, 1886. Acting Consul at Hyogo in 1889 and 1890; and at Hakodate from November 23, 1890, to April 12, 1892. Promoted to be Consul at Tainan (Formosa), February 4, 1896. Transferred to Tamsui (Formosa), August 21, 1896 (did not proceed); and to Nagasaki, December 28, 1896; appointed to be Consul at Nagasaki, July 28, 1897. Retired, August 15, 1902.  
(FO LISTS 1913)

**Lowder, John Frederic** – was appointed a Student Interpreter at Yedo, in Japan, June 4, 1860; was promoted to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant, April 1, 1864; a 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant, May 25, 1865; an Interpreter, November 26, 1866 (appointment to date from April 1, 1867); and Vice-Consul at Hyogo and Osaka, January 1, 1868. Was promoted to be Consul at Niigata, July 6, 1869; Acting Consul at Kanagawa from August 12, 189, till July 21, 1870. Resigned, September 4, 1872.  
(FO LISTS 1878)

**Mitford, Algernon Bertram** – was employed in the Foreign Office from March 1858 till January 26, 1859; was appointed a Lieutenant in the 3<sup>rd</sup> City of London Rifle Volunteer Corps, April 30, 1861. Was temporarily attached to the Embassy at St. Petersburg from November 11, 1863 till May 1864; was appointed an Acting 3<sup>rd</sup> Secretary in Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service, November 23, 1863, and temporarily attached to the Mission at Peking, February 7, 1865; was attached to the Mission at Yedo, from October 16, 1866, till March 7, 1868, when he was appointed a 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary in Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service. Was transferred to St. Petersburg, July 1, 1871, but did not proceed. Resigned, August 5, 1873. Was appointed Secretary to the Commissioners of Works and Public Buildings, May, 1874.  
(FO LISTS 1878)

**Napier And Ettrick (William John George Napier), Lord** – was nominated Attaché, June, 21, 1869. Appointed to Athens, May 11, 1870; transferred to Berlin, February 13, 1871. Promoted to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Secretary, January 1, 1873; transferred to Madrid, March 3, 1873; transferred to Lisbon, December 3, 1877; and to Brussels, July 24, 1883, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from December 11 to 27, 1883; from May 7 to 14, 1884; from July 2 to August 9, 1884; and from September 20, 1884, to February 13, 1885. Promoted to be Secretary of Legation at Buenos Aires, July 27, 1886. Transferred to Stockholm, January 1, 1887, where he acted as Chargé d'Affaires from February 24 to June 25, 1888; and to Tokyo, December 1, 1888, where he acted Chargé d'Affaires from March 8 to May 1, 1889.  
(FO LISTS 1911)

**Parkes, Sir Harry Smith** – acted as Interpreter at Foochow, June 1842; acted as Interpreter at Shanghai in 1845 and 1846; appointed Interpreter at Shanghai, April 19, 1848; appointed Interpreter at Amoy in 1849; served as Interpreter at Canton, November 21, 1851; appointed Consul at Amoy, August 10, 1854; was Acting Consul at Canton from June 1856 till September 1858; and was transferred to Shanghai, December 21, 1858. Was British Commissioner at Canton, January 1858. Was attached as Joint Chinese Secretary to the late Earl of Elgin's Special Embassy in China, and was employed in various important occasions during the operations which took place in the Peiho, in 1860; accompanied Vice-Admiral Hope, when he advanced upon Tientsin, August 23, 1860; was taken prisoner by the Chinese at Tungchow, September 18, and subsequently released, October 8, 1860. Continued with the late Earl of Elgin's Embassy till his lordship left China in February 1861, when he returned to his duties at Canton. Was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary and Consul-General in Japan, March 28, 1865. Was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Emperor of China, July 1, 1883; and also to the King of Korea, February 27, 1884.

(FO LISTS 1885)

**Plunkett, Sir Francis Richard** – was appointed Attaché at Munich, January 22, 1855; was transferred to Naples, July 20, 1855 till October 30, 1856; was temporarily attached to the Mission at The Hague, January 31, 1857; was transferred to Madrid, November 10, 1857; was appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Paid Attaché at St. Petersburg, July 8, 1859; was appointed a 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary, October 1, 1862; was transferred to Copenhagen, January 19, 1863; to Vienna, October 25, 1865; to Berlin, April 27, 1868; to Florence, July 25, 1868; and to Berlin, July 1, 1871. Was Acting Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin, from July 10 till September 2, 1872. Was promoted to be Secretary of Legation at Yedo, October 14, 1873, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from February 8 till March 17, 1876; and was transferred to Washington, January 28, 1876, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from April 6 to 12, 1877; and from May 9 till November 18, 1877. Was promoted to be Secretary of Embassy at St. Petersburg, August 1, 1877, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from July 28 till September 26, 1878; from May 11 to July 2, 1879; from August 29 till December 17, 1879; and from September 10 till December 16, 1880. Was transferred to Constantinople, March 1, 1881. Was Minister Plenipotentiary at Paris, from August 24 to October 23, 1882; and from July 22 to October 3, 1883. Was promoted to be Envoy Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary, and Consul-General at Tokyo, July 1, 1883. Was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the King of Sweden and Norway, April 30, 1888; and transferred to Brussels, July 1, 1888; appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at Vienna, September 9, 1900. Sworn a Privy Councillor, February 9, 1901. Retired, May 7, 1905.

(FO LISTS 1906)

**Quin, John James** – was appointed a Student Interpreter in Japan, August 3, 1867. Was promoted to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Assistant, August 23, 1869; a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, January 1, 1872; and a 1<sup>st</sup> Class, April 1, 1873. Was Acting Consul at Hakodate from October 1, 1880, to February 18, 1883; was promoted to be Vice-Consul at Tokyo, August 6, 1882. Was nominated, provisionally, Consul for Hakodate and Niigata, September 9, 1884; and was appointed to those posts, May 20, 1886. Was Acting Consul at Yokohama from June 4 to September 24, 1888; and at Hyogo from September 28, 1888, to February 18, 1889. Was transferred, as Consul, to Nagasaki, October 1, 1888.

(FO LISTS 1896)

**Robertson, Russell Brooke** – was appointed a Student Interpreter in Japan, February 4, 1860; was appointed an Assistant in 1863; 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant at Nagasaki, April 1, 1864; and 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant, April 28, 1866. Was Acting Vice-Consul at Osaka in 1868. Was promoted to be 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant at Hyogo, July 8, 1869; was Acting Vice-Consul at Yedo from February 17 till August 28, 1869; was appointed Vice-Consul at Yedo, February 8, 1870; transferred to Kanagawa (Yokohama), August 31, 1870; and promoted to be Consul at Yedo, May 2, 1871. Was in charge of the Vice-Consulate at Yedo from July 26 till August 31, 1871. Was Acting Judge for Japan from July 28, 1881, to February 1, 1883.



(FO LISTS 1888)

**Satow, Sir Ernest Mason** – was appointed a Student Interpreter in Japan, August 20, 1861. Was present at the action of Kagoshima, in September, 1863. Appointed an Interpreter for the Japanese language, April 1, 1865; and Japanese Secretary, January 1, 1868. Given the local rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary to the Legation at Yedo (Tokyo), July 20, 1876. Promoted to be Agent and Consul-General at Bangkok, January 16, 1884; and to be Minister Resident and Consul General, February 17, 1885. Transferred to Monte Video, December 17, 1888. Promoted to be Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Emperor of Morocco, and Consul General in Morocco, August 1, 1893. Appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Emperor of Japan, June 1, 1895. Transferred to Peking, October 26, 1900. Retired on a pension, October 26, 1906.

(FO LISTS 1913)

**Trench, Power Henry Le Poer** – was nominated Attaché, June 10, 1859; and was appointed to Paris, August 17, 1859; was transferred to Constantinople, January 23, 1860; to Munich, December 17, 1861; was promoted to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Secretary, November 10, 1863; was transferred to Rio de Janeiro, August 10, 1865; and to Washington, January 6, 1868, where he was also Private Secretary to Sir Edward Thornton. Was promoted to be 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary at Florence, August 1, 1870 (but did not proceed), and transferred to Washington, November 11, 1870. Was employed in the Foreign Office from January 1, 1879, till October 31, 1881, when he was transferred to Rome. Was promoted to be Secretary of Legation at Tokyo, May 28, 1882. Acted as Chargé d'Affaires from August 30, 1883, to March 15, 1884; and from August 8, 1887, to March 7, 1889. Was promoted to be Secretary of Embassy at Berlin, October 1, 1888, where he acted as Chargé d'Affaires from October 25 to November 18, 1889; from September 7 to October 12, 1890; from November 1 to November 12, 1890; from January 4 to 11, 1891; from January 16 to March 10, 1891; from June 27 to 30, 1891; from July 1 to 25, 1891; from September 16 to October 15, 1891; from April 21 to May 7, 1892; from September 11 to October 18, 1892; from November 17 to December 3, 1892; and from March 27 to May 20, 1893. Was promoted to be Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Mexico, July 1, 1893; and appointed Envoy Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary and Consul General at Tokyo, Japan. Retired, January 20, 1896.

(FO LISTS 1897)

**Troup, James** – was appointed Student Interpreter in Japan, August 31, 1863; 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant, October 9, 1865; and 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant, January 1, 1868. Acting Consul at Niigata from August 5, 1869, to September 26, 1871. Promoted to be 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant, January 1, 1872. Acting Consul at Hakodate from November 5, 1871, to July 19, 1873. Promoted to be H.M. Vice-Consul at Niigata, April 1, 1873; and to be Consul at Nagasaki, April 1, 1877. Transferred to Hyogo and Osaka, April 1, 1882; and to Yokohama, as Consul for the District of Kanagawa, June 23, 1888. Was a British Delegate on the Tariff Commission appointed for the negotiation of the Supplementary Convention with Japan, July 16, 1895. Promoted to be Consul-General for the Consular District of Kanagawa (Yokohama), and also to be Assistant Judge of H.M. Court in Japan, November 18, 1896. Retired, April, 1898.

(FO LISTS 1913)

**Watson, Robert Grant** – was appointed an Ensign in 2<sup>nd</sup> Bombay Regiment in 1853; Lieutenant, 1855; was attached to the Staff of the late Sir James Outram in the Persian Gulf, in May 1857; to the Legation in Persia, June 1, 1857, to be temporarily employed at Herat, but was ordered to return to India to join his regiment on the outbreak of the Mutinies; was employed on active military service in the Southern Mahratta country from August 8, 1857, till close of the mutiny war; was appointed 3<sup>rd</sup> Paid Attaché at Tehran, April 18, 1859; was employed in the Embassy at Constantinople from July till October, 1859; was employed in the Caucasus in January 1862; was promoted to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary, October 1, 1862; and a Captain in H.M.'s Staff Corps, June 11, 1865, which commission he resigned, December 23, 1865. Was employed at Kermanshah and Hamadan, in January, 1865. Was nominated 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary at Constantinople, August 10,

1865, which appointment was cancelled, and he was transferred to Buenos Aires, October 5, 1865. Was employed in the Foreign Office from September 9, 1865, till February 28, 1866. Was sent on service to Santa Fé in May, to Patagonia in June, 1866, and to Paraguay in March 1867. Was transferred to Rio de Janeiro, January 28, 1867. Was sent on special service to the mining district in the province of Minas Geraes in April 1868, and transferred to Constantinople, January 6, 1869. Was promoted to be Secretary of Legation at Athens, January 27, 1870, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from April 16 to May 13, 1871, and Chargé des Archives from July 9 till September 21, 1871. Was transferred to Yedo, March 6, 1872, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from May 26, 1872, till March 26, 1873. Was transferred to Copenhagen, October 11, 1873, but did not proceed; and to Washington, February 16, 1874, where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from June 27 till October 19, 1874. Was transferred to Lisbon, January 6, 1876, where he Acting Chargé d'Affaires from February 29 till April 20, 1876; and to Stockholm, October 26, 1876; where he was Acting Chargé d'Affaires from August 17, till November 1, 1877. Was unemployed from April 5, 1879, till January 1, 1880, when he retired on a pension.  
(FO LISTS 1882)

**Winchester, Charles Alexander** – entered the Civil Service in China, June 4, 1842, as Medical Officer in charge of the settlement of Hong Kong; was appointed Consular Surgeon at Amoy, October 15, 1843, which office was abolished, March 31, 1844; was appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant and Medical Officer at Amoy, July 1, 1844; 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant, February 1852; was Acting Vice- Consul at Whampoa from April 1 till December 24, 1854; returned to Amoy as 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant in December; was Acting Consul until the end of March 1855, when he was removed to Ningpo as Acting Vice-Consul, where he remained till March 8, 1856; was appointed Vice- Consul at Canton, July 16, 1855; was Acting Consul at Canton from April 14 till June 11, 1856; from February 21 till July 11, 1858, and from May 12, 1859, till October 19, 1860. Was summoned to Shanghai to take charge of that Consulate, but allowed to proceed home on sick leave. Was appointed Consul for Hakodate, in Japan, March 28, 1861, and was transferred to Kanagawa, December 14, 1862. Was Chargé d'Affaires in Japan from March 22 till May 23, 1862. Officiated as Consul at Nagasaki from July 1, 1862, to March 23, 1863, and then returned to Kanagawa. Was Chargé d'Affaires in Japan from December 24, 1864, till July 8, 1865; was transferred as Consul to Shanghai, March 1865. Retired, June 9, 1870.  
(FO LISTS 1886)

**Woolley, William Abram** – was appointed a Student Interpreter in Japan, April 14, 1871. Was promoted to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Assistant, April 1, 1877. Was Acting Vice-Consul at Niigata from September 21 to October 8, 1879; Acting Consul at Nagasaki from October 30 to November 24, 1879, and from August 15 to September 12, 1880; and at Hyogo from December 24, 1881, to January 4, 1882; from June 3 to July 13, 1882; from August 8 to October 26, 1882; and from March 1 to June 20, 1883; Acting Vice-Consul at Hakodate from July 10 to October 5, 1883; and Acting-Consul at Hyogo from October 6 to December 3, 1883. Was promoted to be 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant, December 16, 1883. Was Acting Vice-Consul at Hakodate from December 4, 1883, to October 27, 1884; Acting Consul at Nagasaki from November 6 to December 31, 1884; and Acting Consul at Hyogo from September 8 to October 7, 1886. Retire, July 1, 1887.  
(FO LISTS 1895)

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